Daniel Tödt
The Lumumba Generation

Africa in Global History

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Volume 5

Daniel Tödt

The Lumumba Generation

African Bourgeoisie and Colonial Distinction in the Belgian Congo

Translated by
Alex Skinner

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Introduction

A photograph presents the bourgeois family idyll in Léopoldville. The father, sitting in an armchair in the foreground, dominates the living room scene. He is wearing a white shirt and tie, polished leather shoes and trousers with a crease in them. His elbows resting on the arms of the chair, he is engrossed in the *Voix du Congolais*, a newspaper for the vernacular elite published by the Belgian Congo's General Government from 1945 onwards. In the centre of the picture but in the background, his wife, wearing a dress, is holding a baby in her arms. In front of her to the left there are two children: their daughter is standing with her face turned away from the camera, and their older son is also reading. The living room is equipped with a radio and a fan, while the tables are decorated with flowers and crocheted tablecloths. A tea service sits on the coffee table, around which the family members are arranged.

This photograph, commissioned by the General Government's Press and Propaganda Department in 1952 and titled "A Family of Congolese Évolués in Léopoldville" reveals what the Belgian colonial state viewed as exemplary and civilized family life within the framework of its elite-making. This is just one example of the countless photographs and articles relating to the model *évolué* that circulated after the Second World War in the colonial public sphere. The so-called *évolués* were a small but elite group of educated Congolese,[1] consisting of graduates of mission secondary schools and holders of subaltern posts in the colonial working world. They had made their voices heard and articulated their first demands to the colonial state shortly before the end of the war, calling for a special legal status, improved living conditions, a greater say and recognition. "What will be our place in the world of tomorrow?"[2] – this is how Paul Lomami-Tshibamba's article summed up the question of their position in the future colonial order, with as much apprehension as expectation, in March 1945.[3] Dur-

1 In this study I use the – less than optimal – terms "Congolese" and "Congolese people." With reference to the elite, I alternate between the terms "vernacular elite" and "Congolese elite." I speak of Africans and Europeans when, as in the legal debate, this reflects the terminology in the sources. On the problems entailed in using groups and identities as analytical units, see R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000).

2 P. Lomami-Tshibamba, "Quelle sera notre place dans le monde de demain?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 2 (March-April 1945). All quotations from foreign-language literature and sources were translated into English by Alex Skinner.

3 By colonial order I mean a specific form of social order. In very general terms, an order may be understood as the situatedness of people in "organizations, institutions and systems, as well as through institutionalized expectations, traditions, customs and traditions." See J. Baberowski,

OpenAccess. © 2021 Daniel Tödt, published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110709308-001

ing this period, the colonial state found itself compelled, for the first time, to set about forming a so-called African elite, and it defined this group's desirable features. What emerged was a highly idealized set of discourses and images steered by the colonial state, from which the *évolués* had to take their lead if they were to be viewed as legitimate representatives of the elite. The colonial public sphere, particularly periodicals such as the *Voix du Congolais*, portrayed this new elite as much as they staged and guided it.

But upon closer inspection, the bourgeois idyll in the photograph turns out to be deceptive. At the left edge of the photograph, the body of one family member is cut off by the camera angle in such a way that all we see of this individual is an uncovered leg and bare feet. This disruption to the visual composition of the ideal family scene may reflect the photographer's technical incompetence. For strait-laced European contemporaries, however, nakedness was one of the key criteria by which they affirmed their own civilizational superiority and colonized societies' "primitiveness and savagery."[4] In a figurative sense, this element of the imperfect typifies a discourse of colonial distinction in which the *évolués*, despite all the bourgeois culture on display, were interpreted as "unfinished products" of the civilizing mission – and thus as unworthy of an improved legal status.

Regardless of all the rhetoric, the emergence of an educated Congolese elite was the last thing the Belgian colonial state wanted. As in other parts of colonial Africa, the inhabitants of the Belgian Congo were to be denied social participation, a political say, legal equality and positions of responsibility for as long as possible. "No elite, no worries": this motto was a common thread running through European rule in Africa. But that contemporaries associated this principle with Belgian colonial policy reflects the euphemistic character of "elite formation" in the Congo. What it actually meant was denying people access to universities, in both metropole and colony, and the right to political participation, for far longer than in British and French territories. In the colonial state, such forms of social discrimination were backed by a legal system that institutionalized injustice. First and foremost, "Africans" and "Europeans" represented juridical classifications that corresponded with separate legal systems. It was thus legal to systematically impose repressive punishments and forced labour on Af-

"Was sind Repräsentationen sozialer Ordnungen im Wandel? Anmerkungen zu einer Geschichte interkultureller Begegnungen," in *Arbeit an der Geschichte: Wie viel Theorie braucht die Geschichtswissenschaft?*, ed. J. Baberowski (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010), 11–12.

4 See P. Levine, "States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination," *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 2 (2008); P. Levine, "Naked Truths: Bodies, Knowledge, and the Erotics of Colonial Power," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 1 (2013).

ricans, subject them to violence and deny them freedoms and participation. As this legal segregation was in turn legitimized by supposedly differing levels of civilization, it is unsurprising that the Congolese elite sought to obtain a special status by highlighting their development. Those who wished, for example, to claim the legal privileges of elite status had, among other things, to demonstrate a blameless family life, as evident in the previously mentioned photograph. Yet within a racist colonial ideology, such upwardly mobile boundary-crossing within the colonial social order was a theoretical possibility at best. In the Belgian Congo, such social ascent was denied even to the elites due to their alleged inadequacies. In colonial Africa, elite formation was meant to prevent the formation of an elite.

That which was cut off only visually in the family photograph – the bare feet – evokes other images associated with the earlier reign of terror in the colonial Congo. The shocking photographs of the severed hands of Congolese who had failed to fulfil their quota of forced labour during the rubber harvest were the iconographic epitome of the exploitative and murderous Congo Free State, the private possession of Belgian King Leopold II between 1885 and 1908. An international campaign against the atrocities in the Congo, run mainly by missionaries, focused on the media dissemination of photographs of human suffering, ultimately triggering the transfer of the colonial territory to the Belgian state in 1908.[5] As the heir to a colony that had seen such savagery, henceforth Belgium felt compelled to reassure the global public sphere of the exemplary character of its colonial policies.[6] While its propaganda foregrounded the development of modern residential districts, hospitals and primary schools, it failed to mention labour regimes and instruments of domination that stood in continuity with the Free State. And though the *évolués* were extolled as perfect residents of the model colony after 1945, the violence, disenfranchisement and racist discrimination inherent in colonial rule continued to shine through here and there in staged photographs. We can no more separate the image of the *évolué* family in the living room from this reality than we can the capital city of Léopoldville from the man it was named after. Both lead into the same darkroom of colonialism.

5 S. Sliwinski, "The Childhood of Human Rights: The Kodak on the Congo," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 3 (2006), doi:10.1177/1470412906070514; K. Grant, "Christian Critics of Empire: Missionaries, Lantern Lectures, and the Congo Reform Campaign in Britain," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 2 (2008), doi:10.1080/03086530108583118.

6 For an analysis of the influence of violence and suffering in the Free State on Belgian colonial policy, see N. R. Hunt, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

Fig. 1: The staging of an *évolué* family in Léopoldville, 1952.

Vernacular elites and decolonization

The discrepancies between Belgian colonial propaganda and the lived experience of Congolese collided on 30 June 1960 before the eyes of a global public. At the Republic of the Congo's independence celebrations, King Baudouin was the first to give a speech, in which he glorified independence as the final, crowning achievement of Leopold II's brilliant plan and as an expression of his civilizing mission, a project tenaciously continued by the Belgian state. Newly elected prime minister Patrice Lumumba spoke next:

> We have seen that the law was never the same, depending on whether one was white or black: accommodating for the former, cruel and inhumane for the latter. [...] We have seen that in the towns there were splendid houses for the whites and dilapidated huts for the blacks, that a black was refused entry to cinemas, restaurants and so-called European businesses, that a black travelled in the hold, at the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins. Who will ever forget the rifle fire in which so many of our brothers lost their lives,

> the cells into which those unwilling to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were brutally thrown? All that, my brothers, we have endured.[7]

Lumumba's stark reckoning with Belgian colonial rule reflected his recent experience as an anti-colonial nationalist. A few months before, he had been arrested after calling for a "Congolese revolution" before a crowd of supporters of his party, the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC). But because his presence as a political heavyweight was essential at the negotiations on the colony's future, he was released from his prison cell and took a seat at the Table Ronde with torture-induced injuries. There, together with other Congolese negotiators, he fought for and won political independence. Five months later, Lumumba stood at the lectern as prime minister. King Baudouin, meanwhile, may well have been recalling his first visit to the Congo five years earlier, his "triumphant tour," when ecstatic crowds waved at him from the side of the road calling out *bwana kitoko* ('beautiful, noble man'). It was also the king who, with a paternalistic air, had first held out the prospect of independence – albeit tentatively – a few days into 1959. His goal was to contain the uprising of Congolese in Léopoldville, which had begun following a prohibited political gathering. He wished to see his subjects released carefully into independence and remain under the protection of the Belgian crown. In his speech, however, he explained away the fact that events were moving at such a rapid pace as the manifestation of a judicious colonial policy, one intended to prevent the kind of armed conflicts seen in Algeria or Kenya.

The contrary narratives advanced by Lumumba and Baudouin on Independence Day are reflected in two trends of historiography on the decolonization of Africa. The first focuses on the armed or peaceful anti-colonial struggle, variously involving nationalists, trades unions and armed resistance fighters, which succeeds in achieving independence. It takes account of the many sacrifices, struggles and privations undergone by the inhabitants of many countries in pursuit of freedom from colonial rule. The second approach, meanwhile, highlights the European architects of colonial policy, who purposefully implemented prudent plans for an orderly and peaceful transfer of power to moderate forces as the best means of releasing the population into independence.[8]

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7 Speech by Patrice Lumumba on 30 June 1960.

8 The classic work of Ki-Zerbo being a prime example: J. Ki-Zerbo, *Histoire de l'Afrique noire* (Paris: Librairie Hatier, 1978). For a concise account of the historical processes of and schools of research on decolonization, see J. Osterhammel and J. C. Jansen, *Dekolonisation. Das Ende der Imperien* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013). For an introductory text on elites and decolonization,

Neither of these narratives bears up against the complex happenings in the Congo – either before or after independence. In the first few months of the Lumumba government, a chaotic succession of violent events led to the so-called Congo Crisis. This included declarations of independence by individual provinces, deliberate delays to the transfer of power, mutinies and the putting down of uprisings, as well as the intervention of the Belgian armed forces and the dispatch of United Nations (UN) troops – all under the influence of the superpowers of the Soviet Union and United States. Under these circumstances, in hindsight Lumumba's celebrated speech marked the beginning of the deadly end of his premiership. Less than six months later, he was murdered in the breakaway province of Katanga, an event in which the Belgian secret service was involved. Since then, he has entered the history books as a global icon of the struggle for independence in Africa.[9] Lumumba's life story, however, complicates the brief and idealized narrative of an anti-colonial fighter who fell on the frontlines of the Cold War. In a sense, the historical figure of Lumumba oscillates between the two seemingly opposing poles articulated in the independence-day speeches. Lumumba himself was a model *évolué* and as a young post office worker he had sung the praises of explorer Henry Morton Stanley and the Belgian civilizing mission in 1954.[10] Yet he was by no means an opportunistic turncoat. His astonishing personal history says little about Lumumba as a person and much more about the heterogeneous social formation to which he belonged: the *évolués*. His metamorphosis is representative of a generation of Congolese elites for whom there was no contradiction in first serving the colonial state, as most of them did, then defeating and finally inheriting it.

The argument advanced in the present book sounds equally paradoxical, namely that the *évolués* undermined the foundations of the colonial order not despite but precisely because of their close collaboration with the colonial state. In the preface to a collection of writings by Patrice Lumumba published three years after his murder, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre expressed

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see J. Dülffer and M. Frey, "Introduction," in *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, eds., J. Dülffer and M. Frey (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).

9 See M. De Groof, "The Iconography of Patrice Emery Lumumba," in *Lumumba in the Arts*, ed. Matthias de Groof (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020); P. Monaville, "A History of Glory and Dignity: Patrice Lumumba in Historical Imagination and Postcolonial Genealogies," in *Lumumba in the Arts*, ed. Matthias de Groof (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 62–77; I. M. De Rezende, "Visuality and Colonialism in the Congo. From the 'Arab' to Patrice Lumumba, 1880s to 1961" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Michigan, 2012).

10 This contrast is highlighted by J.-M. Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba, correspondant de presse, 1948–1956* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).

the view that Lumumba's efforts to adapt were only seemingly a matter of ingratiation.[11] The *évolués*, he contended, harboured an inherently subversive potential because they showed that Congolese could draw even with the supposedly superior Europeans.[12] When Jean-Pierre Dericoyard publicly acknowledged in the *Voix du Congolais* that the Belgians had civilized the elite in record time, he immediately went on to call for full civil rights. This was a highly subtle form of resistance, which did not amount to a radical anti-colonialism but nonetheless entailed a critique of colonialism. Appropriating colonial propaganda, the *évolués* turned hesitant announcements of reform into urgent demands. The colonial state may not have been disarmed, but the *évolués* noticed that the blunt end of empty promises had a sharply pointed counterpart.

It is no coincidence that Congo's independence, as wrested by the *évolués*, has been described as the result of a "revolution that broke out not in the factories but in the offices."[13] But this book reveals that the roots of Congolese independence also lie in the press, the associations, and the living rooms with which we began. Like Lumumba, other members of government in the post-colonial Congo had made a name for themselves as illustrious representatives of the vernacular elite. And, like him, many of them worked as assistants in the colonial administration, were active as association presidents and journalists, and had attained a special legal status through the demonstrative display of a bourgeois lifestyle. Ultimately, we can only understand Lumumba's anti-colonial struggle and the contradictory actions and views of other key protagonists in the fight for Congolese independence if we look more closely at their shared backstory. This reveals the *évolués*' subtle rebellions.[14] The present book is not another history of Patrice Lumumba, a "great man" of decolonization, but rather the story of his generation – the Lumumba generation.

What can we say about the position, opportunities and constraints typical of the Congolese actors who were addressed as "*évolués*" and "the elite" from 1945

11 J.-P. Sartre, "Préface," in *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*, ed. J. Van Lierde (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963), i–xlv.

12 Ibid., xxxiii.

13 J. Stengers, *Congo, mythes et réalités* (Brussels: Racine, 2005), 265. Much the same applied in Tanzania, where most of the newly created political offices were also occupied by former bureaucrats. A. Eckert, *Herrschen und Verwalten. Afrikanische Bürokraten, staatliche Ordnung und Politik in Tanzania, 1920–1970* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 231–242.

14 Here I seek to honour the insight that the meta-narrative of anti-colonial resistance has downplayed other varieties of social struggle. See F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society. The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6–9.

on? How and why did the *évolués* transform, within 15 years, from the cornerstones of the Belgian colonial system into its pallbearers?

This book scrutinizes decolonization and elite formation in Africa. Elite-making policy was among the many top-down measures pursued by the Belgian colonial state in an attempt to alter the colony's social order through "social engineering."[15] But it would be to tell just one side of the story if this book were to remain limited to the visions and statements of European actors. Hence, I analyse elite-making in this study as a social and cultural process that mostly involved Congolese who were described as the elite or as *évolués* in their own accounts and in those of others. The fact that *évolués* are equated with the elite in the sources reveals a conceptual tension. In pursuing elite-making, the colonial state's goal was not to strengthen other elites typical of colonial Africa, such as merchants or chiefs. In order to prevent the emergence of political and economic competition for Europeans, the authorities made it difficult for Congolese to engage in independent economic activity, and just as systematically turned so-called traditional elites into underlings of the colonial state – by making them the representatives of the local administration.[16] As a new educated elite, the *évolués* were the intermediaries of developmental colonialism – devoid of political and economic power but with plenty of symbolic capital.

While this study traces a temporal arc from the beginning of Belgian colonial rule in the Congo in 1908 to its political independence in 1960, it focuses on the colonial state's elite-making after 1945. This practice was pursued within the framework of Africa's "second colonial occupation,"[17] when the authorities sought to reform but by no means to abolish colonialism. As the European powers, under pressure from the international community, attempted to re-legitimize their rule as "developmental colonialism,"[18] they promised new opportunities for socio-political participation and raised hopes of a better future, especially for the vernacular elite. Until the mid-1950s, the march through the institutions of the colonial state's elite-making represented the best opportunity for advance-

15 First and foremost, the term "social engineering" describes attempts by states to change the social order. For a discussion of this concept, see T. Etzemüller, "Social Engineering," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, accessed February 4, 2021, doi:10.14765/zzf.dok.2.1112.v2.

16 See D. Tödt, "L'État colonial et les élites africaines, une histoire de soumission?," in *Le Congo Colonial. Une histoire en questions*, eds., I. Goddeeris et al. (Waterloo: Renaissance du Livre, 2020); J. Vansina, *Being Colonized: The Kuba Experience in Rural Congo, 1880–1960* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010); R. A. Loffman, *Church, State and Colonialism in Southeastern Congo, 1890–1962* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2019).

17 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 97.

18 A. Eckert, "Spätkoloniale Herrschaft, Dekolonisation und internationale Ordnung. Einführende Bemerkungen," *AfS* 48 (2008): 6.

ment for educated Congolese. Their attempts to adapt and to change themselves within a colonial system undergoing major transformation reflected the lack of political alternatives in the Belgian Congo. It may be true of British and French colonies that the final phase of decolonization after the Second World War was characterized by a plethora of different political imaginaries and developmental trajectories,[19] but this did not apply to the Belgian Congo. There colonialism went essentially unchallenged at least until the mid-1950s; all that various social and political actors discussed was what form it ought to take. Thus, the present study also aspires to sketch out the anachronistic features of Belgian developmental colonialism, which emerge through comparison with the colonial reforms undertaken by other European empires in Africa. The *évolués* were symptomatic of these contrasting approaches.

The formation of the Congolese elite is a history of disappointment. The deep disillusionment felt by the Lumumba generation at colonial reforms helps us understand the mood within society as well as illuminating individual experiential horizons, against the background of which independence was initially discussed and later attained. Research on decolonization in Africa often mentions the delayed political reforms and the discrepancy between discourse and practice that typified colonial reforms after 1945,[20] phenomena that increasingly frustrated and radicalized the vernacular elite.[21] But the focus in these studies on political

19 F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940. The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38. On British decolonization, see J. Darwin, "Decolonization and the End of Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5: *Historiography*, ed. R. W. Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

20 Stengers, *Congo*, 36.

21 On the case of the Belgian Congo, see J. O. Tshonda and N. Delaleeuwe, "'Je veux la civilisation, mais le Blanc ne veut pas de moi' ou le drame du Congo belge au travers de son élite," in *Le manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Élites congolaises et sociétés coloniales. Regards croisées*, ed. N. Tousignant (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2009), 158–159; R. Anstey, "Belgian Rule in the Congo and the Aspirations of the 'Évolué' Class," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870–1960*, vol. 2, eds. P. Duignan and L. H. Gann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); C. Young, *Politics in the Congo. Decolonization and Independence* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), 73–87, 116; M. De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques de la décolonisation congolaise jusqu'à la veille de l'indépendance* (Louvain: Impr. M. & L. Symons, 1970), 129–159, 464; J.-M. Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant. Émergence des 'évolués' et genèse du nationalisme* (Kinshasa: Publications de l'Institut de formation et é tudes politiques, 1998). Studies of other colonies also emphasize the connection between the pursuit of independence and disappointment with the colonial system. For example, it has been argued with respect to the Gold Coast that the African elite's demand for political power was a result of their disappointment at the refusal to grant them opportunities for social advancement; see D. Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana. The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism,*

events often leads them to discern an abrupt break in the elite's relationship with the colonial state. The present book, by contrast, foregrounds the preceding fissures. Unlike much of the existing research, I delve into the expectations of the Congolese elite, as aroused by Belgian colonialism through the reforms announced after 1945, while also bringing out their experiences against this background. Above all, disappointments lay bare conflicts. The colonial state and the African elite long shared the view that the future of the Belgian Congo lay in a reformed colonialism. But their expectations diverged on when this future would dawn. This book thus examines the African elite's disappointment at the slow pace of colonial development. Their frustrated hopes did not lead directly to independence but did make it seem more appealing as an option for the future. By also attending to a "past future" of the elite that failed to eventuate,[22] this study breaks with the teleological narrative of liberation from colonial rule.[23] Akin to Michael O. West's analysis of Rhodesia, here the elite's struggle to break away from colonialism is the second act in a "play" centred on their efforts to attain an enhanced place within the colonial order. This adds another chapter to the history of decolonization, one that tells of the gruelling struggle of a culturally bourgeoisified elite for equality, recognition and a say within the colonial system.

In light of their later political careers, the *évolués* have an established place in the historiography of the Belgian Congo.[24] Jean-Marie Mutamba-Makombo's comprehensive study was the first to describe in detail the *évolués*' many forms of interpenetration with the colonial state and decolonization.[25] Many studies, however, have focussed on their role in the independence movement to the extent that they often lose sight of those aspects that did not have imme-

1850 – 1928 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). Again, with reference to the Gold Coast, R. Finsterhölzl, *Kommerzielle Werbung im kolonialen Afrika. Die Werbebranche und der politische Wandel in Ghana 1930 – 1970* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), extends this argument to the frustration felt by the elite at the discrepancy between advertised consumer goods and de facto purchasing power.

22 R. Koselleck, "Erfahrungsraum und Erwartungshorizont. Zwei historische Kategorien," in *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, ed. R. Koselleck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989).

23 For a paradigmatic example of this approach, see Cooper, *Decolonization*, 6 – 9.

24 Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 220 – 223; Young, *Politics*, 203; De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 63 – 75; I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo. De l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique* (Paris: Duculot, 1998), 251 – 263; Stengers, *Congo*, 274; D. Van Reybrouck, *Congo. Een geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2010), 315.

25 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*.

diate political consequences in a narrow sense.[26] The few studies on the *évolués*' lifeworlds concentrate on the associations, which are viewed as forerunners of the political parties that were permitted only in 1958,[27] but so far there have been no in-depth examinations of associational sociability and the embedding of the associational landscape in the colonial state's elite-making policy.[28] The small number of biographies on representatives of the Congolese elite foreground those who became political leaders in the post-colonial era. In particular, the biography of Patrice Lumumba has been traced in detail, but less is known about other members of his generation.[29]

26 Through excurses in social and cultural history, exceptions can be found here and there in the study by Congolese historian Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 188–194; this also applies to J.-M. Mutamba-Makombo, "Im Salon eines kongolesischen Évolué in den vierziger und fünfziger Jahren," in *An-Sichten. Malerei aus dem Kongo, 1990–2000*, eds. J. Bogumil and B. Plankensteiner (Vienna: Springer, 2001). American historian Nancy Rose Hunt adopted an essentially cultural historical approach in the early 1990s with research on gender roles, family models and doctor's assistants as an occupational group. N. R. Hunt, "Noise over Camouflaged Polygamy. Colonial Morality Taxation, and a Woman-Naming Crisis in Belgian Africa," *Journal of African History* 32 (1991); N. R. Hunt, "Letter-Writing, Nursing Men and Bicycles in the Belgian Congo. Notes Towards the Social Identity of a Colonial Category," in *Paths Toward the Past. African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina*, eds. R. W. Harms and J. Vansina (Atlanta: 1994); N. R. Hunt, "Le Bébé en Brousse. European Women, African Birth Spacing and Colonial Intervention in Breast Feeding in the Belgian Congo," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21 (1998); N. R. Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); see also G. Mianda, "Colonialism, Education and Gender Relations in the Belgian Congo. The Évolué Case," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, eds. J. M. Allman et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

27 The transition from association to political party is emphasized by T. B. Bakajika, *Partis et société civile au Congo-Zaïre. La démocratie en crise: 1956–1965 & 1990–1997* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); R. Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 175–184; B. Verhaegen, *Les premiers manifestes politiques à Léopoldville* (Brussels: CEDAF/ASDOC, 1971).

28 A schematic overview of the associational landscape is provided by B. Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises à Léopoldville et dans le Bas-Congo avant 1960," *Cahiers économiques et sociaux* 8 (1970); C. Tshimanga, *Jeunesse, formation et société au Congo/Kinshasa 1890–1960* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001). The *évolué* association in Stanleyville was the subject of one study because Lumumba served as its president; B. Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués de Stanleyville et les débuts politiques de Patrice Lumumba (1944–1958)* (Brussels: CEDAF/ASDOC, 1982).

29 See, for example, the two-volume work on Lumumba's life by J. O. Tshonda and B. Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba: Jeunesse et apprentissage politique, 1925–1956* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998); J. O. Tshonda and B. Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba: Acteur politique. De la prison aux portes du pouvoir, juillet 1956-février 1960* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005). On Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the first president of Congo, see C.-A. Gilis; *Kasa-Vubu au coeur du drame congolais* (Brussels: Editions

Particularly after the Second World War, colonial ideologues were not alone in regarding the vernacular elite as the harbinger of social renewal and as drivers of cultural change. In the 1950s and 1960s, social scientific research, bolstered by the discourse of progress and modernization, also interpreted "westernized Africans"[30] as an *avant-garde*. Especially influential was the definition of a "social elite"[31] first advanced by Africanist and anthropologist Siegfried Frederick Nadel, a student of Bronisław Malinowski. In an anthology published by UNESCO in 1956, Nadel defined the elite as a "standard-setting group [that] stands for the ideal achievements and aspirations of the people and their culture."[32] In light of the role ascribed to them as the vanguard of political transformation, scholarly interest in the elite intensified in the early 1960s.[33] High offices of state in the independent nations of Africa were occupied by virtually unknown individuals, arousing the international community's interest in their biographies and social background. While the authors of an anthology titled *The New Elites of Tropical Africa* rhapsodized about what they saw as an "almost virgin field,"[34] subsequently the scholarly interest in the elite largely subsided.[35] In par-

Europe-Afrique, 1964). For short biographies of the politicians of independent Congo, see P. Artigue, *Qui sont les leaders africains* (Brussels: Editions Europe-Afrique, 1961).

30 To cite one common *topos* in research on the African elite during the 1950s. K. Little, "The African Elite in British West Africa," in *Race relations in World Perspective*, ed. A. W. Lind (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1955), 271.

31 S. F. Nadel, "The Concept of Social Elites," *International Social Science Bulletin* 8 (1956): 422. The associated anthology includes studies of the African elite in Ivory Coast, South Africa, Senegal, the Belgian Congo, the Portuguese colonies and Nigeria. Several studies on the elite in colonial Africa later drew on Nadel's definition. See for example K. A. Busia, "The Present Situation and Aspirations of Elites in the Gold Coast," *International Social Science Bulletin* 8 (1956); Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 138; A. W. Southall, "The Concept of Elites and their Formation in Uganda," in *The New Elites of Tropical Africa*, ed. P. Cutt Lloyd (London: Routledge, 1966).

32 Nadel, "The Concept," 422.

33 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 22.

34 The authors examined cultural values, the formation of social classes, the relationship between elite and the masses, occupations and lifestyles, underlining the differences between the regions of Africa. P. C. Lloyd, "Introduction," in *The New Elites of Tropical Africa*, ed. P. C. Lloyd (London: Routledge, 1966), 50 – 55.

35 The 1980s saw the publication, for example, of A. Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); K. Mann, *Marrying Well. Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Of recent research, I would highlight Eckert, *Herrschen*; M. O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898 – 1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); J. Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914 – 1956* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); A. Keese, *Living with Ambiguity. In-*

allel to this, studies on decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s began to refer to these elite middlemen as collaborators with the colonial state, a conceptual pairing that suggests similarities with French collaboration with Nazi Germany during the Second World War.[36] Historians and authors contributing to the national historiography of post-colonial African states have also been interested chiefly in moments of open resistance to the colonial regime.

Over the last 20 years, however, studies on subject formation in colonial Africa have tackled the state's efforts to turn people into cogs in the machine of colonial rule.[37] Their authors have sought to show how the colonial state created the African pillars of its rule.[38] Only in the last two decades, then, have historians with a solid grounding in the social and cultural sciences studied the room for manoeuvre of the middlemen who exercised a crucial influence on Africa's colonial history.[39] Recent studies tend to understand collaboration in a value-neutral way – as cooperation – and seek to uncover what incentives the (predominantly

tegrating an African Elite in French and Portuguese Africa (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007); S. Newell, "Entering the Territory of Elites. Literary Activity in Colonial Ghana," in *Readings in African Popular Culture*, ed. K. Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). For a critical classification of research on the African elite, see C. Lentz, "Elites or Middle Classes? Lessons from Transnational Research for the Study of Social Stratification in Africa," *Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies* no. 161 (2015).

36 B. N. Lawrance, "Introduction," in *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, eds. B. N. Lawrance et al. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 6.

37 For a discussion of the concept of colonial subject-making, see A. Wirz, "Einleitung: Körper, Raum und Zeit der Herrschaft," in *"Alles unter Kontrolle." Disziplinierungsprozesse im kolonialen Tansania (1850–1960)*, eds. A. Wirz et al. (Cologne: Köppe, 2003), 9; M. Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika. Expedition, Militär und Verwaltung seit 1880* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 26. For similar research perspectives in the anglophone world, see Lawrance, "Introduction," 7.

38 On policemen in colonial Togo, see J. Glasman, *Les corps habillés au Togo. Genèse des métiers de police* (Paris: Karthala, 2015). On bureaucrats in Tanganyika, see Eckert, *Herrschen*. On teachers in colonial Senegal, see J.-H. Jézéquel, "'Les mangeurs de craies.' Socio-histoire d'une catégorie socio-professionnelle en situation coloniale. Les instituteurs diplomés de l'école normale William-Ponty (1900–1960)," (PhD diss., École des hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 2002). On soldiers in Tanganyika, see Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft*. On African workers in the Belgian Congo, see J. Seibert, *In die globale Wirtschaft gezwungen. Arbeit und kolonialer Kapitalismus im Kongo (1885–1960)* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2016). On the role of consumption and advertising in the creation of a middle class in the Gold Coast, see Finsterhölzl, *Werbung*. On the creation of girls in the context of developmental colonialism, see A. George, *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in 20th-Century Colonial Lagos* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).

39 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 19–22.

male) African "intermediaries"[40] saw in cooperation with the colonial state. They have tried to respond to the calls, which had previously fallen on deaf ears, for an analysis of the specific opportunities and tensions, negotiations and constraints, entailed in colonial subjects' cooperation with the colonial state.[41]

But the emergence of an educated elite who took their lead culturally from European models was not unique to the Belgian Congo but rather a general feature of colonialism in Africa. The equivalents of the francophone colonies' *évolués* or *lettrés* were the 'educated Africans' of the British colonies and the *assimilados* or *civilizados* in the Portuguese colonies.[42] How colonial policy approached this group differed among the imperial powers and changed over time, though we can certainly reconstruct similar varieties of political rule, racist discrimination and inter-imperial knowledge transfer.[43] The European colonial powers all shared a sceptical attitude towards educated Africans as a group, imputing to them a particular susceptibility to anti-colonial ideas. During the interwar period especially, the colonial powers thus increasingly relied on traditional elites as intermediaries.[44] With its programmes of modernization after 1945, however, developmental colonialism required new collaborative elites who could cope with the new challenges of administration and possessed key forms of tech-

40 On this term, see M. Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches. Ostafrika im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010), 29 – 30, 312; Lawrance, "Introduction," 5 – 8. The term "middlemen" is often used synonymously; see A. Eckert, *Grundbesitz, Landkonflikte und kolonialer Wandel. Douala 1880 – 1960* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999).

41 See R. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialisms*, eds. R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), 123 – 124. Located within this research tradition is Lawrence, "Introduction."

42 Key texts on the British case are Eckert, *Herrschen*; S. Newell, *"How to Play the Game of Life." Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); P. S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects. An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000). On the case of the Portuguese colonies, see Keese, *Living*; D. L. Wheeler, "Origins of African Nationalism in Angola. Assimilado Protest Writings 1859 – 1929," in *Protest and Resistance in Angola and Brazil. Comparative Studies*, ed. R. H. Chilcote (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

43 A comparative study of the elite-making policies of France and Portugal in Africa, which brings out the manifold transfers between these two colonial powers and the learning processes involved is provided by Keese, *Living*, 102 – 109.

44 This was typical of indirect rule in the inter-war period. On indirect rule and on the fact that not just the British but the French too adopted elements of this governance strategy, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 41; C. Marx, *Geschichte Afrikas. Von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn: UTB, 2004), 250.

nical knowledge.[45] This ambivalence of colonial rule, in which the authorities were dependent on intermediaries but would have much preferred to do without them, is traced in the present volume with reference to the *évolués* of the Belgian Congo.

Évolués, African bourgeoisie and colonial distinction

Within the framework of the colonial state's elite formation in the Belgian Congo after 1945, the terms *évolués* and "elite" were used synonymously. As a term in francophone colonial sources, from the inter-war period onwards it appeared in French and Belgian texts.[46] In general, the term referred to the group of intermediaries typical of colonial Africa who had completed secondary education, oriented themselves towards European culture and mostly worked in the administrative system as office assistants. It first appeared in the French possessions in West Africa. Particularly in Senegal, which had enjoyed a special status among France's overseas territories since 1848, the terms *évolués* and *lettrés* took hold for educated and French-speaking Africans who sought to embrace values and lifestyles propagated as French.[47]

It is key to the heuristic framework informing the present study that the term *évolués* can be placed at the intersection of colonial elite-making, the civilizing mission and bourgeois culture – and thus brings together disparate strands of research on the colonial history of Africa and global social history.

The roots of the term *évolués*, the 'developed,' lie in a racist semantics of progress that construed African societies as civilizationally backward according to European standards, though a liberal variant of this idea proposed that this gap could be closed over the long term on an individual basis, through cultural assimilation.[48] The word reflected the dominance of theories of sociocultural

45 Ibid.; A. Eckert, *Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2006), 75.

46 A handful of studies have been produced on *évolués* in the francophone colony. On the case of Senegal, see Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*; on Gabon, see L. M. Nnang Ndong, *L'effort de guerre de l'Afrique. Le Gabon dans la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011); on Dahomey, see S. Anignikin, "Les élites africaines et l'indépendance. Le cas des 'évolués' du Dahomey (Benin)," *Outre-mers, Revue d'histoire* 98 (2010). But the term *évolués* was not used solely with reference to sub-Saharan Africa. The administration and press in Algeria used it for the assimilated, educated Muslim elite in the 1910s. See O. Carlier, *Images du Maghreb, Images au Maghreb* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010), 20.

47 See Keese, *Living*, 94–101.

48 In French colonialism, assimilation was a concept key to the politics of the civilizing mission. Understood as the adoption of European values, lifestyles and behavioural norms, assim-

evolution that rose to prominence in the nineteenth century and assumed universally valid stages of cultural development. At the top was the highly developed and civilized bourgeois culture of Europeans, at the bottom the supposedly primitive and savage culture of African societies.[49] Europe's sense of superiority over other continents intensified in the mid-nineteenth century, when evolutionism entered into a fatal alliance with social Darwinism and racial theories; colonial conquests and claims to power were legitimized with reference to the civilizing mission, which was seen as a global responsibility. In the colonial order, in light of their "state of development," Africans were regarded as politically subservient and civilizationally inferior. In line with the logic of a global process of civilizational progress, the *évolués* were those subjects who were climbing the ladder of cultural development and for whom every additional step promised advancement within colonial society. Though this has gone unrecognized by historians so far, elite formation in the Belgian Congo thus points beyond the boundaries of the African continent. While they were not referred to as such, the *évolués* were an African bourgeoisie in the making.[50]

Hence, the book also probes the place of colonial Africa in the history of the global bourgeoisie, breaking new ground by neither walling the *évolués* up, heu-

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ilation promised colonial subjects access to French citizenship. While in European countries the concept of assimilation means the cultural adaptation of immigrants or minorities to the dominant majority society, in the colonies this relationship was reversed. There, the Europeans embodied the dominant culture, to which the colonized society had to adapt. On this and on the ambivalent assimilation policy pursued by France in both the metropole and in the colonies after 1945, see F. Cooper, "From Imperial Inclusion to Republican Exclusion? France's Ambiguous Postwar Trajectory," in *Frenchness and the African Diaspora. Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, eds. C. Tshimanga et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

49 For a general account, see C. Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare: Class Conflicts and the Representation of the Colonial World in European Middles Class Thought," in *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire*, eds. C. Dejung et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 254–255; C. Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie," ibid, 16–17; E. Saada, "Entre 'assimilation' et 'décivilisation.' L'imitation et le projet colonial républicain," *Terrain. Revue d'éthnologie de l'Europe* 44 (2005); U. Frevert and M. Pernau, "Europa ist eine Frau: jung und aus Kleinasien. Beitrag zum Themenschwerpunkt 'Europäische Geschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte,'" *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte 2009*, www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/artikel-3548 (1 July 2016). On the Congolese case, see J.-M. Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués. Situation au Congo Belge," in *Le manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Élites congolaises et société coloniale. Regards croisés*, ed. N. Tousignant (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis), 84; Verhaegen, "L'Association des Évolués," 5–8; Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale*, 451–452.

50 On differing and alternative terminologies of bourgeois culture in global perspective, see Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare," 265.

ristically, within the territorial boundaries of the Belgian Congo nor overemphasizing particularistic traits. There are several historiographic reasons for this novel approach. Michael O. West has rightly pointed out that educated Africans as a group have "variously [been] called elite, petty bourgeois, or middle class" by historical actors.[51] His outstanding study of the middle class in colonial Zimbabwe also alternates between the use of these terms.[52] Yet a terminology derived from European social history was often applied too blithely to the African or colonial context.[53] The aforementioned studies produced in the 1950s and 1960s referred to colonial middlemen and post-colonial politicians almost arbitrarily as "elites" or "bourgeoisie."[54] Only Frantz Fanon was more explicit: in his Marxist reading, the "African bourgeoisie," wearing its "white masks," had betrayed oppressed peoples striving for freedom. Since the 2010s, meanwhile, Africa's "middle class" has been trending in anthropological studies that have sought to shed light on the lifeworld of globally networked and economically ascendent groups in countries such as Angola, South Africa, Kenya and Botswana.[55] Actor-centred studies are providing an important corrective to definitions of the new "middle class" based solely on economic data and have sketched out ways of placing Africa in global perspective. Carola Lentz, for example, sees "middle class" as "a multidimensional concept that refers to a socio-eco-

51 M. O. West, "'Equal Rights for all Civilized Men': Elite Africans and the Quest for 'European' Liquor in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1924–1961," *International Review of Social History* 37 (1992), 376–397.

52 West, *Rise*, 240.

53 For an illuminating account, see C. Dejung, "Auf dem Weg zu einer globalen Sozialgeschichte? Neuere Ansätze zu einer Globalgeschichte des Bürgertums," *Neue Politische Literatur. Berichte über das internationale Schrifttum* 59 (2004); C. Dejung, "Transregional Study of Class, Social Groups, and Milieus," in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. M. Middell (New York: Routledge, 2019); Lentz, "Elites."

54 L. Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie. Race, Class, and Politics in South Africa* (Bloomsbury: Yale University Press, 1965).

55 For introductory and paradigmatic accounts, see Lentz, "Elites"; C. Lentz, "Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South: Comparative Perspectives and Conceptual Challenges," *Africa* 90, no 3 (2020); A. Behrends and J. Pauli, "Zwischen Charisma und Korruption. Kontinuitäten und Brüche in der Auseinandersetzung mit Eliten in Afrika," in *Kontinuitäten und Brüche. Fünfzig Jahre Unabhängigkeit in Afrika*, eds. T. Bierschenk and E. Spiess (Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe, 2012), 305–309; H. Melber, *The Rise of Africa's Middle Class: Myths, Realities and Critical Engagements* (London: Zed Books, 2016); Kroeker, L., D. O'Kane, and T. Scharrer. *Middle Classes in Africa. Changing Lives and Conceptual Challenges* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). C. Mercer and C. Lemanski, "Introduction," *Africa* 90, no. 3 (2020). On South Africa, see D. James, *Money from Nothing. Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

nomic category, a cultural world and a political discourse."[56] She calls for an analysis of normative discourses and practices that amount to a "'doing being middle-class.'"[57] The present-focus of anthropological research, however, makes it easy to lose sight of forerunners in colonial history.

The new global-historical research on the bourgeoisie provides additional points of departure for the history of colonial Africa. Research on the bourgeoisie initially focussed mainly on specific European countries, though several scholars then produced comparative studies. With few exceptions, however, they did not look beyond Europe.[58] That bourgeois culture and the bourgeoisie in the imperial age can by no means be regarded as an exclusively European phenomenon is the finding of recent studies on the nineteenth century.[59] Though just a small number of bourgeois milieus, such as those of merchants and academics, operated on the international stage, these studies show that the European bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century had a global perspective via consumer goods and specific realms of knowledge.[60] One major way in which the European bourgeoisie was connected with the world was through its self-image as the spearhead of worldwide development and civilizational progress.[61] As the "social class upholding imperialism,"[62] its members reassured themselves of their sophistication through their encounter with other societies that they perceived as primitive,

56 Lentz, "Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South," 461.

57 Ibid., 459.

58 For an overview of the extensive research on the bourgeoisie, see T. Mergel, "Die Bürgertumsforschung nach 15 Jahren," *AfS* 41 (2001); A. Schulz, *Lebenswelt und Kultur des Bürgertums im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: De Gruyter, 2005). The cultural-historical aspects are emphasized by M. Hettling, *Bürgerlichkeit als kulturelles System* (Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2010). The way to a European comparative perspective in research on the bourgeoisie was paved by the anthologies edited by J. Kocka, *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich; eine Auswahl* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995). For studies on Belgium, see S. Jaumain and G. Kurgan van Hentenryk, *Aux frontières des classes moyennes: la petite bourgeoisie belge avant 1914* (Brussels: Université de Bruxelles, 1992); G. Kurgan van Hentenryk, "Permanence et recompostion des élites," in *Les classes sociales en Belgique. Deux siècles d'histoire*, ed. G. Vanthemsche (Brussels: CRISP, 2017). Only recently was the negligible research and the lack of attempts at synthesis in Belgian social history criticized in G. Vanthemsche, "Introduction," in *Les classes sociales en Belgique. Deux siècles d'histoire*, ed. G. Vanthemsche (Brussels: CRISP, 2017), 51.

59 See C. Dejung, D. Motadel and J. Osterhammel, *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019).

60 Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie," 17.

61 Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare," 255.

62 B. C. Schär, *Tropenliebe: Schweizer Naturforscher und niederländischer Imperialismus in Südostasien um 1900* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015), 23.

whether in the context of armchair reading or their own visits to the colonies, at ethnological expositions or in metropolitan museums.[63] The "precarious unity," maintained by a shared bourgeois culture and way of life, of the white European bourgeoisie – whose heterogeneity is evident in different terminologies and research traditions[64] – became consolidated through a shared view of the non-European peoples. As a continent supposedly without history, Africa furnished historical actors with an important medium of contrast that lent contour to the stereotype of a bourgeois subject understood as European, white and male: "Africa [...] was a *camera obscura* of [...] civilisation, a virtual portrait of all that bourgeois refinement was not."[65] Like a silhouette, the white bourgeoisie stood out against a black substrate.

And yet the "men (and women) in the middle of an ever-expanding set of connections" – who made up the emerging global bourgeoisie in the early nineteenth century – included those "middlemen" in the coastal regions of Africa and Asia where economic and political forms of European imperialism had made themselves felt at an early stage.[66] In port cities of the African Atlantic coast such as Freetown, St. Louis and Lagos, transregionally linked groups of traders – more than a few of them former slave traders or freed slaves – forged important networks with Europeans by adopting standardized bourgeois modes of behaviour, seeking social and economic advancement in the wake of the abolition of slavery through "legitimate trade."[67] But even Africans with a classical

63 For a general account, see F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3. On the staging of this contrast at colonial exhibitions in Belgium, see M. G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo. A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2012), 58.

64 J. Kocka, "Das europäische Muster und der deutsche Fall," in *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, ed. J. Kocka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995). The anthologies edited by Jürgen Kocka discuss, among other things, the different and mutable social formations of the French bourgeoisie, British citizens and the German *Bürgertum*. See Kocka, *Bürgertum*.

65 J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff, "Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in South Africa," in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. K. T. Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 64.

66 R. Drayton, "Race, Culture, and Class: European Hegemony and Global Class Formation, Circa 1800–1950," in *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire*, eds. C. Dejung et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 341 and 345.

67 For example: M. Lynn, "Technology, Trade and 'A Race of Native Capitalists': The Krio Diaspora of West African and the Steamship, 1852–95," *Journal of African History* 33 (1992); J. F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce. The Senegal River Valley, 1700–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); R. A. Austen and J. Derrick, *Middlemen of the Came-*

education and dressed in the finest clothes by no means unsettled the arrogant self-image of the European bourgeoisie, whose members not only believed they enjoyed a monopoly on civility but saw themselves as a shining yet unachievable example to the world.

It was above all through the colonial civilizing mission in Africa, beginning in the 1880s, that the "hegemony of bourgeois culture" found expression in the imperial age.[68] It was believed that "normative globalization"[69] would raise the supposedly backward and barbarous peoples to a higher cultural level.[70] Despite differing motives, state and missionary actors pushed values, cultural techniques and modes of behaviour on the colonized population that were viewed as European or civilized culture.[71] When British missionaries in South Africa converted locals to the Christian faith or colonial schools in Senegal educated the future middlemen of French West Africa, they were effectively instructing them in bourgeois culture, the work ethic, intimacy, domesticity, gendered orders and the notion of the monogamous family.[72] Whether the cultural models, as in the British empire, were imparted by Protestant missionaries of an evangelical cast relatively independent of the colonial state or through close cooperation between state and church as in the French empire:[73] the colonial civilizing mission was an engine of the "global spread of bourgeois standards."[74]

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roons Rivers. The Duala and their Hinterland, 1600 – 1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

68 Cooper and Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony," 30. With respect to the late nineteenth century, they also refer to the "bourgeoisification of imperialism." See also A. L. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 10.

69 J. Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World. A Global History of the Nineteenth Century.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 827.

70 For a nuanced of the civilizing mission, see B. Barth and J. Osterhammel, eds., *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Konstanz: UVK, 2005); on the French civilizing mission, see A. L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize. The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895 – 1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

71 C. Egger and M. Gugglberger, "Editorial," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 24, no. 2 (2013).

72 Comaroff and Comaroff, "Home-Made," 38 – 45; J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution. The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 274 – 322. On the pupils of the École normale William Ponty in Dakar, see Jézéquel, "Les mangeurs de craies," 158 – 173.

73 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 830 – 831.

74 Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie," 15. Similar arguments are advanced by Cooper and Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony" 30 – 31; M. Pernau, "Transkulturelle Geschichte

A global perspective on the civilizing mission has underlined the crucial role played by the ideals of contemporary actors who as "high-minded bourgeois reformers found themselves in the midst of 'uncivilized' majorities."[75] This civilizing mission encompassed not just the territories outside Europe, but also the European underclasses.[76] Mainly in the cities, this "internal mission" sought to inculcate the norms of a "civilized" culture in groups perceived as deviant and dangerous, such as the working class, the homeless and the poor.[77] But while the deviance of slum dwellers in Europe was viewed as a consequence of urbanization, deviance in Africa was explained in light of its low level of development.[78] Social reformers in Victorian London, missionaries in Freetown and educated Africans in Cape Coast all discussed the differences and commonalities of bourgeois culture in different parts of the world.

The pioneers of a global history of the bourgeoisie also took a comparative approach, the cultural turn in German historical research on bourgeois culture furnishing them with a template in this regard.[79] The shift from a socio-economic definition of the bourgeoisie towards lifestyles and values also facilitated the identification of bourgeois culture in the age of European imperialism in all its interconnected complexity. Authors have discerned a range of indicators of the emergence of a "bourgeois existence outside Europe"[80] in the context of complex processes of appropriation: upward social mobility through one's own efforts, doing highly skilled jobs, a sense of superiority, the struggle for respecta-

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und das Problem der universalen Begriffe. Muslime Bürger im Delhi des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Area Studies und die Welt. Weltregionen und neue Globalgeschichte*, ed. B. Schäbler (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2007), 146.

75 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 834.

76 Recent studies, however, have revealed "direct connections between both projects of 'elevation,' which influenced one another." S. Conrad, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2008), 94. See also Conrad's case study of the workers' settlements in East Westphalia and German East Africa: S. Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006), 74–117.

77 See, for example, R. Lindner, *Walks on the Wild Side. Eine Geschichte der Stadtforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004). On the case of Berlin, see J. Wietschorke, *Arbeiterfreunde. Soziale Mission im dunklen Berlin 1911–1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013).

78 Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare," 260.

79 On the cultural approach, see Kocka, *Bürgertum*; H. Bausinger, "Bürgerlichkeit und Kultur," in *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. J. Kocka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); W. Kaschuba, "Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit nach 1800 – Kultur als symbolische Praxis," in *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3, ed. J. Kocka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); Hettling, *Bürgerlichkeit als kulturelles System*. For a critical assessment of this research approach, see Mergel, "Bürgertumsforschung," 523–525.

80 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 766.

bility, domesticity, a greater proximity to the state than typical of Europe, associations as a pre-political form of civil society, gender relations and family models, self-perfecting and a faith in progress, habits of consumption and styles of dress.[81] The first empirical case studies have explored settings in Asia, the Arab world and South America,[82] though increasing attention has been paid above all to India under British rule.[83] On the basis of similar characteristics in occupational groups and in light of social and cultural practices of distinction, Margrit Pernau has shown convincingly that Muslims in colonial Delhi can certainly be interpreted as bourgeois subjects – even if they wore a turban rather than a top hat.[84]

Research on the bourgeoisie that seeks to integrate a global history perspective has as yet scarcely considered Africa.[85] This seems to have something to do

81 Ibid., 772, 774, 775, 777; see Dejung, "Auf dem Weg," 232.

82 An initial overview of this research is provided by R. A. López and B. Weinstein, eds., *The Making of the Middle Class. Toward a Transnational History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Dejung, "Auf dem Weg." For a comparative study of Japanese and German civil society, see M. Hettling and G. Foljanty-Jost, eds., *Formenwandel der Bürgergesellschaft. Japan und Deutschland im Vergleich* (Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2009). On the emergence of a middle class in the Middle East under colonial rule, see K. D. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East. Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006). On the urban middle class in inter-war Southeast Asia, see S. L. Lewis, *Cities in Motion. Urban Life and Cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia, 1920–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

83 See, for example, S. Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); D. Chakrabarty, "The Difference – Defferral of a Colonial modernity. Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal," in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); M. Pernau, *Bürger mit Turban. Muslime in Delhi im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); M. Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability and the Colonial Public Sphere. The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India," *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001); S. Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); C. Dejung, *Fäden des globalen Marktes. Eine Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Welthandels am Beispiel der Handelsfirma Gebrüder Volkart 1851–1999* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013). The prominence of the Indian case is due not just to its centuries-old written and intellectual tradition, but also to the fact that India has become a privileged arena for "subaltern studies." On the value of the latter to research in global history, see S. Conrad and A. Eckert, "Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen: Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt," in *Globalgeschichte. Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*, eds. S. Conrad, A. Eckert and U. Freitag (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2007), 22–26.

84 Pernau, Bürger, 355–359.

85 The studies by M. O. West, "The African Middle Class in Zimbabwe. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," in *The Making of the Middle Class. Toward a Transnational History*, eds. R. A. López and B. Weinstein (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), and E. Hunter, "Modernity,

with the fact that in Africa, in many cases it was not until the 1880s that a "Western-oriented elite" took shape in the mission schools, while the colonized population was less integrated into the new economic structures than in Asia or was ousted from the realm of commerce.[86]

Colonial Africa provides an important corrective to the tendency to interpret "bourgeois existence in Asia and Africa from the late nineteenth century on" primarily as entailing attempts at "linking into the development of 'civilized' morals and lifestyles."[87] Even more than a history of "inclusion," the history of bourgeois culture in colonial Africa is one of exclusion. The colonial state's elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo dramatically illustrates the "exclusionary processes" inherent in the term (bourgeois) "citizen" in the imperial age.[88] Recent studies have established that the European bourgeoisie had values in common and defended them *vis-à-vis* colonial subjects, while also concluding that the emergence of a global bourgeoisie went hand in hand with "the asymmetries of colonial rule and racial exclusion."[89] But what has been lacking is empirically rich research on how actors with bourgeois ambitions in colonial Africa responded to the fact that they were allocated to the lowest level of civilization.

The Lumumba Generation takes us into the world of "doing being middle class"[90] in colonial Africa, though this was a world in which the wrongdoings of the African bourgeoisie were lamented over and over again. However much the Congolese elite oriented itself towards the bourgeois ideal, in order to preserve the colonial order, it was vital that they never live up to it. The position of the *évolués* within the global bourgeoisie was one of exclusionary inclusion.

To cut to the chase: an African bourgeois class was not a desirable goal for the Belgian colonial state. The predominant narratives of the bourgeoisie had two roots. The first was its struggle for freedom: inspired by Enlightenment

print media, and the middle classes in Colonial East Africa," in *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire*, eds. C. Dejung et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019) are exceptions. Research on educated Africans in the British and French colonies also contains only scattered references to the importance of bourgeois culture. On the African associations in the Gold Coast, which borrowed from a bourgeois template, see Newell, *Game of Life*, 27–52; J. K. Prais, "Imperial Travelers: The Formation of West African Urban Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in London and Accra, 1925–1935," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Michigan, 2008), 333–345.

86 See Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 766.

87 Ibid, 771.

88 Pernau, "Transkulturelle Geschichte," 146.

89 Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie," 2. See also Lentz, "Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South," 447.

90 Ibid.

ideas, it rebelled against the aristocracy and the king in the French Revolution in order to achieve democracy and civil rights. Alternatively, in a Marxist reading, "bourgeoisie" meant the dominant class in capitalism, namely the one that controls the means of production. The *évolués* in the Belgian Congo were not supposed to be distinguished by social and political participation or by economic power and civil rights. They were meant to wear suits and read the newspaper in the living room surrounded by their family. But the Congolese elite was unwilling to be reduced to a bourgeoisie in a culturalist sense – and this too is an aspect of the Lumumba generation.

Tellingly, the sources on the Belgian Congo almost never use the term "bourgeois" to refer to educated Africans eager to advance within society. For historians, meanwhile, use of the term "African bourgeoisie" might entail the imposition of Eurocentric standards, the conceptual colonization of local phenomena resulting in the idea of their deficiency. To avoid this risk, the present work does not try to shoehorn its historical object into the mould of bourgeois culture, instead analysing how and why historical actors themselves kept a "checklist" of bourgeois characteristics.

It was colonial officials, missionaries, settlers and the vernacular elite who engaged in fraught discussions on the *évolués*' adaptation to elements of bourgeois culture and tried to come to grips with the consequences of this process for the social and political order. This was by no means merely a matter of style. It pertained to rights, influence, having a say, and power. The question of the similarities and differences between white bourgeois citizens and black *évolués* was thus highly political and explosive. It was centred on the foundation for the legitimacy of colonialism and laid bare the "internal contradictions of colonial rule."[91] On the one hand, the colonial state derived its legitimacy from its self-imposed mission to civilize the African population and stylized Europeans as the model for those pursuing cultural assimilation. On the other hand, it sought to ensure that the "dose of civilizing"[92] among Africans was not too high, because their cultural otherness always legitimized the European claim to political dominance and civilizational superiority. Hence, it was not just the British and French, but the Belgians too who idealized the improved but not Europeanized African.[93] The African bourgeoisie emerged "in the inter-

91 See Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft*, 28. See also, Comaroff and Comaroff, *Revelation*, 212.

92 A. Eckert, "Kolonialismus, Moderne und koloniale Moderne in Afrika," in *Selbstbilder und Fremdbilder. Repräsentationen sozialer Ordnungen im Wandel*, eds. J. Baberowski et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008), 64.

93 Cooper and Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony," 7; Eckert, "Kolonialismus, Moderne," 64–65.

stices of relations of domination."[94] It had to assert itself in a social order in which white supremacy rested on the permanent marking of difference *vis-à-vis* the colonized population.[95] These differences were always a key theme in colonial discourse and had to be performed and demonstrated in everyday life and within the social world in such a way that the African population accepted their lot as backward subjects.[96] The maintenance of "colonial dichotomies" was "hard work" for the actors of the colonial state.[97] *The Lumumba Generation* shows that this production of difference became particularly laborious due to the steady growth in the number of educated Congolese who made the civilizing mission their own, and who saw cultural bourgeoisification as the royal road to advancement and recognition within society. Within this dichotomy, the vernacular elite found itself on the borderline between the "civilized" European governing elite and the "barbarous" African population. They stood at the centre of a battle ground of colonial distinction.[98]

The present book understands the "cultural bourgeoisification"[99] of the *évolués* as an empowerment strategy pursued by colonial subjects, which was based on the individual accumulation of social and cultural capital in institutions of African elite formation. This was a contingent and cultural process of social ascent under the constraints of the colonial situation. Cultural bourgeoisification, however, does not imply a history of diffusion in which European bourgeois cul-

94 Drayton, "Race, Culture, and Class", 358.

95 Stoler, "Foucaults 'Geschichte der Sexualität' und die koloniale Ordnung der Dinge," in *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, eds. S. Conrad and S. Randeria (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002), 325. Pesek, *Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 32.

96 Cooper and Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony," 4 and 35.

97 Ibid., 34.

98 The concept of distinction comes from the influential analyses of Pierre Bourdieu: P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). Studies of the global bourgeoisie and the African middle class also grapple with a range of practices of distinction: Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie," 9; Lentz, "Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South"; C. Gastrow, "Housing Middle-Classness: Formality and the Making of Distinction in Luanda," *Africa* 90, no. 3 (2020). This concept also proved popular in French-language studies on the colonial history of Africa. See J. H. Jézéquel, "Grammaire de la Distinction Coloniale," *Genèses* 69, no. 4 (2007); Glasman, *Les corps habillés*.

99 Simone Lässig shows that the cultural bourgeoisification of the German Jews in the nineteenth century was by no means merely a concomitant to their contested membership of the bourgeoisie. Taking Pierre Bourdieu's social analysis as her starting point, in the accumulation of cultural capital she discerns a prerequisite for, and crucial preliminary step towards, the German Jews' career as "model citizens." S. Lässig, *Jüdische Wege ins Bürgertum. Kulturelles Kapital und sozialer Aufstieg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 40.

ture gradually spread in Africa and was adopted in an unquestioning way. The agency of the *évolués*, the colonial power structure and the local contexts led to diverse and hybrid forms of bourgeois culture located somewhere between incorporation and attempts at resistance. Nor does this study propound a "history of deficiencies"[100] that assumes an unfinished form of bourgeois culture outside Europe. But it does show that – for historical actors in the Belgian Congo – the hybridization mentioned so often in the history of the global bourgeoisie with reference to the African continent[101] was an expression of deviant deficiency and evidence of lack of development. Inherent in the colonial state's elite-making was the demand for standardization, the idea that only total compliance with the bourgeois ideal could justify access to social prestige and legal privileges. In the logic of colonial distinction, bourgeois culture became a dogma. When we look closely, we find that for the *évolués* the three-piece suit was both garb of power and straitjacket.

Analytic fields

The Lumumba Generation brings out the tense relationship between the empowerment and disempowerment of the African bourgeoisie. With reference to a variety of situations, places, media and biographies, I probe the changing discursive realms and lifeworld of the Congolese elite, whose ambivalent position in the colonial order was subject to a transformation every bit as sweeping as that which enveloped the politics and discourses of the colonial project itself. Inspired by cultural analysis, I seek first to describe the broadest possible panorama of the colonial state's elite-making. Second, with the help of case studies, I provide a close-up view in order to both contextualize and exemplify aspects of cultural bourgeoisification.[102]

I pay particular attention to the media of the elite public sphere. So far, the Belgian Congo has largely been a footnote in the press history of colonial Afri-

100 Pernau, *Bürger*, 8.

101 Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie," 16.

102 The logic of the historical cultural analysis entails understanding "cultural phenomena by first investigating the web of relationships" in which they are embedded. R. Lindner, "Bandenwesen und Klubwesen im wilhelminischen Reich und in der Weimarer Republik. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Kulturanalyse," in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, no. 3 (1984). On the development of the historical analysis of culture as an approach to research, see J. Wietschorke, "Historische Forschung in der Europäischen Ethnologie. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag," in *Kultur_Kultur: Denken. Forschen. Darstellen*, eds. R. Johler et al. (Göttingen: Waxmann, 2013).

ca.[103] The few publications focused on Congolese authors have provided portraits of specific periodicals or overviews of press history.[104] Tellingly, the *Croix du Congo*, a high-circulation newspaper serving the educated elite that was close to the missions, has been discussed in just one book on the journalistic activities of Patrice Lumumba.[105] The *Voix du Congolais* newspaper has served as the basis for content analyses of the articles produced by Congolese authors. For the first time, however, I analyse its ambivalent role as an organ of the General Government and voice of the African elite.[106] On the one hand, the Belgian

103 For an introduction to the colonial press in Africa, see D. R. Peterson, E. Hunter and S. Newell, *African Print Cultures. Newspapers and their Publics in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016); E. Hunter, "Newspapers as Sources for African History," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2018), accessed 11 October 2020, doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.228; C. H. Ambler, "Mass Media and Leisure in Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35 (2002); S. Newell, *The Power to Name. A History of Anonymity and Colonial West Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013). For case studies, see J. Glassman, "Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar's Newspaper," *Journal of African History* 41, no. 3 (2000); R. Heinze, "'It recharged our Batteries.' Medien in der Dekolonisierung Afrikas," *Zeitgeschichte Online*, June 2010, http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/Themen-Heinze-06–2010 (20 February 2021); T. Odhiambo, "Inventing Africa in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Imagination, Politics and Transnationalism in Drum Magazine," *African Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006); N. Plageman, "'Accra is changing, isn't it?' Urban Infrastructure, Independence, and Nation in The Gold Coast's 'Daily Graphic,' 1954–1957," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2010); P. Zessin, *Die Stimme der Entmündigten: Geschichte des indigenen Journalismus im kolonialen Algerien* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012).

104 Just one anthology on the press of the Belgian Congo has appeared. See M. Quaghebeur, and B. Tshibola Kalengayi, *Aspects de la culture à l'époque coloniale en Afrique centrale. Presse. Archive* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008). Contemporary publications on the press landscape of the Belgian Congo are encyclopedic in character. See, for example, J. Berlage, *Répertoire de la presse au Congo belge (1884–1954) et du Ruanda-Urundi (1930–1954)* (Brussels: Commission belge de bibliographie, 1955); J.-M. Van Bol, *La presse quotidienne au Congo Belge* (Brussels: Pensée catholique, 1959); H. Claessens, *La Presse d'Information en Afrique Belge* (Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1958). Additional literary overviews are provided by M. Kadima-Nzuji, *La Littérature Zaïroise de langue française* (Paris: Karthala, 1984); S. Riva, *Nouvelle histoire de la littérature du Congo-Kinshasa* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).

105 Mutamba-Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba*. The exception is B. Misobidi, "'La Croix du Congo' et 'Horizons.' Face à l'indépendance," (PhD diss., Université Nationale du Zaïre, Kinshasa, 1977).

106 Kadima-Nzuji, *Littérature*, 40–45; Riva, *Nouvelle histoire*, 40–43. For a concise account of the *Voix du Congolais*, see M. Kadima-Nzuji, "Autour de la Voix du Congolais. Les premiers auteurs zaïrois," *Notre Librairie* 87 (1982). For a content analysis of the newspaper, though one that leaves aside the historical context, see N. O. Eloko, *Les structures inconscientes de "La Voix du congolais"* (1959) (Brussels: CEDAF, 1975); B. Kadima-Tshimanga, "La société sous le vocabulaire. Blancs, Noirs et Évolués dans l'ancien Congo belge (1955–1959)," *Mots* 5 (1982): 1.

colonial state provided educated Congolese with a media-based public sphere in order to preserve its influence on the new elite and allow it to monitor how their views were developing. On the other hand, it was the periodicals that enabled the elite to conceive of themselves as a colony-wide group with a specific identity in the first place. Couched in constructivist terms, the Congolese elite became a reality only in the wake of elite-making policy and through the communicative nexus of the colonial state's periodicals.

The Lumumba Generation also examines the elites' social world. Crucially, given the intermeshing of associations and periodicals as key institutions in the colonial state's elite-making, the analysis presented here integrates both the discourse and practice of the elite,[107] while also scrutinizing colonial discourse and colonial practice, with a focus on everyday situations.[108] Borrowing from Georges Balandier, I analyse "colonial situations" in which power relations were up for negotiation.[109] Investigation of the institutions of elite-making illuminates how the order-stabilizing differences between Europeans and Africans were produced within the framework of developmental colonialism.

Running like a thread through my narrative is the vernacular elite's demand for access to the status of citizen.[110] Insistence on an exclusive legal status was

107 For a discussion of discourse analytical approaches in the discipline of history, see P. Sarasin, "Subjekte, Diskurse, Körper. Überlegungen zu einer diskursanalytischen Kulturgeschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, special issue 16: *Kulturgeschichte heute*, eds. W. Hardtwig and H.-U. Wehler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

108 This approach has been adopted by a number of recent studies, of which I can mention just a selection here. See, for example, U. Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen. Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika 1880 – 1914* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2011), 19; H. Fischer-Tiné and S. Gehrmann, "Introduction: Empire, Boundaries and the Production of Difference," in *Empire and Boundaries. Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings*, eds. H. Fischer-Tiné and S. Gehrmann (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4. On the combining of the analytical levels of discourse and practice, see also A. Mbembe, *Sortir de la grande nuit: Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); E. Sibeud and M.-A. De Suremain"'Histoire coloniale' et/ou 'colonial studies', d'une histoire à l'autre," in *Écrire l'histoire de l'Afrique autrement?*, eds. P. Bartelemy, S. Awenengo, and C. Tshimanga (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 80 – 83.

109 G. Balandier, "La situation coloniale: Approche théoretique," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 11 (1951). In terms of disciplinary history, the analysis of specific colonial situations dates back to the studies of Max Gluckman, published in 1940. Frederick Cooper fittingly refers to Balandier's approach as the "micropolitics of the colonial situation" and that of Gluckman as the "micropolitics of a colonial situation"; F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 35.

110 On citizenship in France's African empire, see F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation. Remaking France and French Africa, 1945 – 1960* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014). An overview of the history of imperial citizenship is provided by D. Gosewinkel,

the key theme of the upwardly aspiring Lumumba generation.[111] So far, the debate on the legal status of the Congolese elite has been described with reference to European legislatures and with an emphasis on the elite's disappointment at the failure of the associated reforms.[112] Congolese authors' contributions to the debate on status reform enter into these accounts for purposes of illustration or are reproduced in detail but without relating them to the political decision-making process.[113] For the first time, the present study places the *évolué* status in the Belgian Congo in the context of contemporaneous debates on citizenship in other African colonies.[114] The strict division of colonial society into segregated legal systems, with one legal status for Europeans and another for Africans, was tempered by an intermediary group. The inhabitants of Senegal, for example, like other territories of the French Atlantic empire, had rights of political participation and an inferior form of citizenship by 1848. Just under 50 years later, residents of the enormous colonial territory of French West Africa, established in 1895, could potentially obtain the so-called "*évolué* status" on the premise of cultural assimilation.[115] By 1936, of 14 million inhabitants, a minority of just 2,000 individuals held this status.[116] In the French colonies – with the exception of four municipalities in Senegal – by 1945 only those subjects who had adapted to the precepts of French culture and a bourgeois way of life could gain European status. Culture became the key criterion for legal equality because this status related

Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), 284 – 345.

111 Taking Karl Mannheim's classic treatise on the "problem of the generation" as a starting point (K. Mannheim, *Mensch und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter des Umbaus* [Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1935]), Lindner has discerned in the "theme of the generation" a socializing effect on the formation of generational entities. R. Lindner, *Die Stunde der Cultural Studies* (Vienna: WUV Universitätsverlag, 2000).

112 Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 217; Young, *Politics*, 73 – 87; De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 129 – 159; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 206.

113 Kadima-Nzuji, *Littérature*, 49 – 64.

114 Overviews of citizenship in colonial Africa as a research field are provided by E. Hunter, "Introduction," in *Citizenship, Belonging and Political Community in Africa. Dialogues between Past and Present*, ed. E. Hunter (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016); S. R. Dorman, "Citizenship in Africa: The Politics of Belonging," in *Routledge Handbook of Global Citizenship Studies*, eds. E. F. Isin and P. Nyers (London: Routledge, 2014).

115 On the dissemination of demands for citizenship in the nineteenth-century French Atlantic, see L. Semley, *To Be Free and French. Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). On the specific case of Senegal, see Jézéquel, "Les mangeurs de craies," 199.

116 H. Sharkey, "African Colonial States," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History*, eds. J. Parker and R. Reid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156.

mainly to penal and civil law and the latter dealt with highly culture-specific phenomena such as marriage and family. In the colonial legal logic, then, a change of legal status presupposed cultural assimilation.[117] These issues were so contentious in French and Belgian colonialism because conceding cultural equality to Africans shook the foundations of the colonial order, whose legitimacy rested on differences between Europeans and Africans.[118]

When reference was made to the Congolese elite, in the first instance this meant men. As a relational and dynamic concept, masculinity is constituted through a hierarchical gendered relationship with other masculinities and concepts of womanhood, a relationship that took on complex forms in the colonial context.[119] The *évolués* were supposed to take their lead from the cultural model of their colonial rulers, whose position of power was underlined by the performance of a "hegemonic masculinity"[120] of European provenance. In pursuit of "colonial masculinity,"[121] the *évolués* distanced themselves from competing forms of masculinity,[122] though they could not live up to the ideal of the white citizen within a racially segregated colonial society. In addition, the present study integrates a gender perspective that addresses the relationality of mascu-

117 See Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie. Les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007), 15; Cooper, "Imperial Inclusion," 95. For an analysis of citizenship and cultural differences as a field of conflict with reference to Algeria under French rule, see T. Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization. The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 19 – 54.

118 Saada, "Entre 'assimilation' et 'décivilisation,'" 32.

119 For an introduction to the history of masculinities, see J. Martschukat and O. Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008). On the extensive historiography of gender history, see for example G. Bock, *Geschlechtergeschichten der Neuzeit: Ideen, Politik, Praxis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); U. Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte. Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1986). An overview is provided by G.-F. Budde, "Geschlechtergeschichte," in *Geschichtswissenschaften. Eine Einführung*, ed. C. Cornelißen (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000).

120 On this concept, see R. W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 2 (2005).

121 For a paradigmatic analysis of colonial masculinity, see M. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). On the concept's transfer to colonial Africa, see for example S. Maß, *Weiße Helden, schwarze Krieger. Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1918 – 1964* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006).

122 On the example of the ambivalent construction of masculinity in colonial Ghana, see S. F. Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). On this field of tension within colonial Kinshasa, see C. D. Gondola, *Tropical Cowboys. Westerns, Violence, and Masculinity in Kinshasa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 10.

linity and femininity.[123] Elite-making focussed chiefly on the male elite as public figures, husbands and family men, together with their notions of femininity. But women were addressed too, as good mothers and good wives, and as a corrective force for their husbands. It was their role to bring up the children and decorate the living room with crocheted fabrics. This book thus includes consideration of the role of women as actors and as producers of a bourgeois culture that was embedded in elite-making.

A study on the African bourgeoisie from a global perspective has to clarify its spatial frame of analysis. There is a tendency to expect studies in global history to extend the boundaries of the colonial territory, but this book will make it clear that the *évolués* could barely travel beyond the Congo and had limited opportunities to build international networks or engage with debates in the global public sphere. The Congolese elite's place in the world was highly circumscribed. It is, nevertheless, essential that the present study follow Frederick Cooper's and Ann Laura Stoler's widely noted call to examine colonies and metropole within a "single analytic field" rather than viewing them in isolation.[124] Yet, while (sometimes profound) mutual influences between metropole and colonies have been established in the case of the British and French empires in particular,[125] scholars continue to view these interconnections as relatively insignificant and limited in the case of Belgian colonialism.[126] The present book seeks not just to identify

123 On this perspective, see for example R. Habermas, *Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums. Eine Familiengeschichte (1750–1850)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 18. Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*.

124 For the discussion of a "single analytic field," see Cooper and Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony," 15.

125 The debate on the impact of colonialism on Great Britain has been highly contentious. Influences on the metropole have been assessed as extensive by A. S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2005), and C. Hall and S. O. Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire. Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). B. Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), is more sceptical. The debate on the French empire in this respect is similarly controversial. See for example Conklin, *Mission to Civilize*; P. Blanchard et al., eds., *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

126 For a detailed account of Congo's influence on Belgium, see G. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo 1885–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Stanard goes so far as to refer to an "imperial immobility" in the case of Belgium and calls for the retention of colony and metropole as separate analytical categories. M. G. Stanard, "Belgium, the Congo, and Imperial Immobility: A Singular Empire and the Historiography of the Single Analytical Field," *French Colonial History* 15 (2014).

entanglements and transfers that spanned metropole and colony and beyond, but also to shed light on their extent and the specific forms they took.

An analytical focus on the Belgian Congo and Belgium emphatically extends the investigation of bourgeois culture from a global history research perspective. First, in spatial terms, as mentioned earlier, the African continent has been given scant attention within this historiography. Second, this applies in temporal terms as well, since the immediate post-war period and the 1950s have been ignored in research on the global bourgeoisie, which has almost always focused on the long nineteenth century. When examining the African bourgeoisie in the Belgian Congo it is to European post-war bourgeois culture that we must look to find the "implicit social visions"[127] inherent in developmental colonialism. Societal development and modernization were simultaneous and at times intertwined post-war projects pursued by Europe's political elites in order to enforce their bourgeois aspirations to global hegemony, which faced challenges from communism and fascism, but also from colonial subjects of an anticolonial bent who were calling for self-determination. The Belgian government – mostly dominated by the Christian Social Party – set great store by bourgeois norms and conservative familial models in the moral reconstruction of both metropolitan and colonial post-war society. The "re-recasting of bourgeois Europe"[128] as evident in Belgium ran in parallel to the "recasting" of the civilizing mission in the Belgian Congo. The moral education of the vernacular elite propagated by the colonial state was in accordance with idealized notions of European bourgeois culture. The British and French African empires' disciplining programmes were pervaded by similar models of bourgeois culture but increasingly decoupled the political and legal integration of colonial subjects from their cultural assimilation.[129] Only in the Belgian Congo, by contrast, did the bourgeois character of the vernacular elite become the central political issue. Until the late 1950s, the *évolués* had available to them neither political parties nor trades unions that might have

127 F. Cooper, *Decolonization*, 174. Cooper makes the case, when analysing colonial projects of "social engineering," for decoding the ideas of social order on which these projects were based.
128 S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 78. On the continuity and disjunctions of the bourgeois way of life after 1945, see G.-F. Budde et al., eds., *Bürgertum nach dem bürgerlichen Zeitalter. Leitbilder und Praxis nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); E. Conze, "Eine bürgerliche Republik?," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 30, no. 3 (2004).
129 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 72–73; F. Cooper, *Kolonialismus denken, Konzepte und Theorien in kritischer Perspektive* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012), 355.

enabled them to advance their demands.[130] For them it was already progress to make their voices heard through periodicals and associations, which were closely aligned with the colonial state, and to call for a special legal status with reference to their feats of cultural assimilation. Given the UN's requirement that the European colonial powers guarantee the colonized peoples political self-determination upon attaining a sufficient level of maturity, in the late colonial Congo a bourgeois way of life determined nothing less than the capacity for democracy and emancipation. In this "global constellation,"[131] the cultural bourgeoisification of the Congolese elite not only became a core criterion for achieving, but above all a barrier to, legal equality and political independence.

Sources and methods

A study of the colonial state's creation of a Congolese elite faces a sources problem. The challenges are due not to a lack of written material but to the surplus of specific source types and the dominance of particular source producers. This study relies mainly on press publications produced in the Belgian Congo from the 1930s to the 1950s.[132] All the issues of the most important elite periodical, the *Voix du Congolais*, are available for the 15 years of its existence and for the most part the same goes for the *Croix du Congo* newspaper, which was published from 1932 on. But this contrasts with the small number of chance finds I managed to make of internal documents produced by the editors. Editorial records were absent from the Colonial Archive in Brussels, the National Archive in Kinshasa and various Congolese press archives. Even visits to various family members of the deceased editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais* failed to turn up documentary evidence. As a result, while we can carry out material-rich content analyses, the study of the background, production, selection and reception of articles is limited to a small number of samples.

130 Powerful trades unions emerged only in the last few years of Belgian colonial rule. See Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 64. On the trades unions' great influence on decolonization in British and French Africa, see Cooper, *Decolonization*.

131 S. Conrad, *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2013), 230.

132 The most fruitful sites of research on periodicals were the *Bibliothèque Royale* and the library of the Colonial Archive in Brussels; the *Bibliothèque Contemporaine* in Tervuren, which holds the papers of historian Benoït Verhaegen; the Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society (KADOC) in Leuven; the *Bibliothèque Bontinck* in Kinshasa; and the *Archives nationales d'outre-mer* (CAOM) in *Aix-en-Provence*. A digital photographic archive based on several dozen newspapers and magazines was created for the present study, comprising a total of 15,000 photo files.

I was able to examine archival materials produced by associations serving the Congolese elite at the Africa Archive in Brussels. These were mainly documents amassed by colonial officials in their role as the patrons of associations, consisting of correspondence between different administrative levels and between association members, constitutions, minutes and photographs. In Kinshasa, I was able to access the privately run archive of an important association of mission secondary school graduates, and I viewed similar source materials in the mission archives in Leuven.[133] In light of the close institutional and personal links between associations and periodicals, press reports by and about associations are a rich source that allows us to draw inferences about the associations' membership trends and activities. In addition, newspaper articles afford us a vivid sense of association life, often allowing us to hear voices that dissent from official reports. Finally, I drew on studies concerned with specific associations and the associational landscape of the Belgian Congo.[134] To analyse associations and periodicals in the context of the colonial state's elite-making policy, I consulted archival materials at the various levels of the colonial administration and colonial government. Depending on the topic at hand, I complemented this stock of sources with grey literature. Documents written from a range of perspectives are available on the negotiation, introduction and implementation of the so-called *évolué* status: expert discussions, debates in newspapers and official announcements. I also carried out interviews myself. In addition, I studied the reports produced by the awarding committees, most of which are evaluated here for the first time. In order to avoid excessive analytical focus on elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo and so as not to inadvertently construct an exceptional case in colonial history, I analyse Belgian colonial reforms after 1945 in the context of a changing international order, comparing them here and there with the developmental colonialism of other European powers.

Research on the colonial state's elite-making that can draw on a wealth of official documents runs the risk of seeing things through the eyes of the colonial state. How might we sharpen our analytical perspective on our fields of investi-

133 In interviews with contemporary witnesses, former association members explained the patchiness of the archival materials by stating that the various presidents and secretaries took personal possession of the documents produced during their time in office. There is evidence of this in the sources as well. See, for example, minutes of the president of the *Cercle Van Gele* association in Libenge, 18 December 1951, AA/GG/6372.

134 The studies on specific associations focus on members who later achieved renown or treat the associations as the forerunners of political parties. Verhaegen, *Les premiers manifestes politiques*; Verhaegen, "L'Association des Évolués."

gation and draw on a corpus of sources that provides insights into both the colonial propaganda of elite-making policy and the lifeworld of the elites?[135]

One tried-and-tested strategy of historical research on colonial Africa consists in developing one's own colonial archive through interviews.[136] The methods of oral history promise to provide access to the so-called African point of view and can enlarge our perspective on historical objects. Nonetheless, as Pierre Bourdieu warned, we should avoid succumbing to the "biographical illusion," that is, reading interviews as authentic and unproblematically truthful accounts.[137] In fact, they are shaped by actors' retrospective efforts to endow remembered events with meaning, by the rationalization and justification of their actions and by the repression or omission of certain elements. A wealth of methodological and theoretical reflections from anthropologically inspired colonial research is of much help in this regard. These underline that scepticism about the Eurocentric perspective discerned in written sources in the colonial archives does not have to give way to uncritical naivety towards a supposedly unmediated and undistorted Afrocentric perspective.[138]

I carried out two dozen interviews with contemporary witnesses in Kinshasa for the present study.[139] My interlocutors were supposed to be individuals in their eighties or older who saw themselves as members of the Congolese elite and were active in associations or as journalists. In fact, just half the interviews could be carried out with representatives of this group of individuals. Several interviews were called off due to illness, while one individual had died by the scheduled date of our meeting. I thus carried out additional interviews with younger companions and descendants of – sometimes famous – representatives of the elite, who provided insights into everyday life in an *évolué* family and what

135 For an overview of research in the history of everyday colonial life, see A. Eckert and A. Jones, "Historical Writing about Everday Life," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2002).
136 J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff, *Ethnography and Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).
137 P. Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris: Seuil, 1994). On the problematization of biographical interviews in colonial history, see for example Eckert and Jones, "Historical Writing," 9.
138 J. Allman, "Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (2013): 106.
139 I carried out multiple interviews with several contemporary witnesses. This amounted to a total of thirty hours of digital audio material. As my research visit began one month after the official celebrations marking 50 years of independence, the history of decolonization was highly present in everyday conversation.

it was like to grow up in one.[140] In some cases, my meetings with contemporary witnesses gave me access to private archives containing photos, diaries, letters and memoirs. These are sources anchored in the everyday world that are largely absent from the state archives.

The educated elite left a large stock of written sources by a variety of authors, which I analysed with the help of several interpretive techniques.[141] First, I read documents from the colonial archives against the grain. Inspired by micro-historical studies of the Middle Ages in Europe,[142] an era with a comparable source problem, this procedure is underpinned by a shift of perspective that gives a "voice" to groups of individuals referred to in the sources.[143] I could thus interpret the deviations and abnormalities generated by the ideal-typical discourse of and about the Congolese elite not as a failure of elite-making, but as evidence of conflicts, alternative visions of life and creative appropriations. Second, following Ann Laura Stoler, I read the sources "with the grain." This does not mean presenting colonial knowledge from the colonial archives as authoritative, but rather emphasizing documents' fragility and ambiguity. Inconsistencies, omissions and seemingly trivial details take on importance when we subject them to historical scrutiny. These "watermarks of empire"[144] must be held up against the light of other sources. Official colonial records are "entangled documents,"[145] which certainly articulate a Eurocentric perspective but always communicate with other documents featuring alternative points of view. I thus paid particular

140 The interviews were geared towards contemporary witnesses' narratives and biography on the one hand, and key research topics on the other. On the method of the semi-structured interview, see F. Stöckle, "Zum praktischen Umgang mit Oral History," in *Oral History. Mündlich erfragte Geschichte. Acht Beiträge*, ed. H. Vorländer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990). On the use of photographs to trigger a response in interviews, see K. Plummer, "On the Diversity of Life Documents," in *Social Research Methods: A Reader*, ed. C. Seale (London: Routledge, 2004). In addition, I used a selection of photos from the colonial period in order to arouse my interviewees' memories. For a critical discussion of oral history and African history that includes consideration of research practices, see L. White et al., eds., *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

141 A recent overview of techniques for interpreting colonial sources is provided by Allman, "Phantoms," 106–107; A. L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 46–49.

142 The classic work of micro-history by C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1975), is often mentioned.

143 However, as Stoler points out, attempts to attribute "agency" to the colonized have often been made at the cost of turning the colonizers from actors into depersonalized components of a power structure. Stoler, *Archival Grain*, 47.

144 Ibid., 51.

145 Ibid., 52.

attention to those events and situations for which various source types could be found. Since every source type has its own significance and different rules governing the representation of events, the challenge is to bring the different material from archives and interviews into dialogue with one another.

Structure

The structure of the following chapters is geared towards the various linchpins of the colonial state's elite-making. At the same time, I maintain an emphatically chronological narrative approach. The beginnings of the Lumumba generation are explored in depth in the first chapter. It presents the foundations of Belgian colonial rule in the Congo and introduces readers to the missionary-run schools and educational establishments that the future elite passed through. I then place the colonial state's post-1945 elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo in the context of a changed international order. The chapter also discusses the connotations of the concept of the Congolese elite and its historical predecessors. The ideal of an elite was oriented towards the notion of a colonial elite, which in the first instance included only Europeans and which highlighted criteria of morality. I argue that elite-making within the framework of developmental colonialism was an extremely delicate undertaking for the Belgian colonial state. Ultimately, the discourse on the Congolese elite's development chimed with a discourse at large in the international community, one that linked the right to self-determination with the maturity of colonized peoples. The so-called *évolués* served, so to speak, as a gauge of Africans' level of civilizational development in the Belgian Congo.

Chapter 2 discusses the press landscape of the Congolese elite. Here the *Voix du Congolais* newspaper, founded in 1945, stands centre stage. Created by the General Government, the *Voix du Congolais* was an important element in a new public sphere that catered to the educated elite and was moulded by colonial power relations. After a brief introduction to the genesis, production, reception and distribution of the *Voix du Congolais*, I analyse its institutional links, conflicts and symbioses with the colonial government. For the aspiring elite, the *Voix du Congolais* was both the media locus of elite subject formation and a forum for making demands of the colonial state. Case studies sound out the potential and limits of the media-based public sphere, in which attempts by Congolese to have their say and colonial propaganda entered into ambivalent fusions. The *Voix du Congolais* emerges as a means of mutual oversight, through which the vernacular elite monitored the implementation of colonial reforms

and the colonial state kept an eye on the journalistic activities of educated Congolese.

Chapter 3 focuses on the post-war debate on the reform of the elite's legal status. The Belgian colonial government planned the so-called *évolué* status as the crowning achievement of its elite-making policy and in this it was responding to demands first made by educated Congolese during the Second World War. To aid understanding of the explosive nature of these issues, the chapter begins with the history of the legal classification of the Belgian Congo's population. It then examines how Congolese authors positioned themselves with the help of the *Voix du Congolais* within the tangled status debate and entered into dialogue with European periodicals and political decision-makers. Discussion of the different versions of status reform drawn up by various expert commissions reveals divergent ideas about the *évolués*' characteristics and the scope of any legal equality with Europeans in the colony. Against the background of resistance among sections of the European population, the African authors of the *Voix du Congolais* served as strategic allies of those advocating an affirmative elite-making policy. The introduction of the *carte du mérite civique* in 1948, as a hard-won compromise solution, is testimony to the fact that the *Voix du Congolais* was of only limited use to the Congolese elite as a medium for debating colonial development.

Chapter 4 gets to grips with the debate among the African elite on "genuine" and "false" *évolués*, an omnipresent theme when *évolué* status was being discussed. Periodicals such as the *Voix du Congolais* and *Croix du Congo* are analysed here as media arenas of colonial subject formation. The authors' ideal-typical discourse on the "perfected black" foregrounded virtues, ideas on morality and self-portrayals as well as social and cultural practices that were viewed as civilized within colonial discourse and were supposed to characterize the new elite. In light of various aspects of elite discourse – education and attire, gendered orders, family and domesticity, consumption and bar culture – discrepancies emerge between expectations of elite conduct and the way they actually lived. The ideal-typical division between bourgeoisified and snobbish *évolués* was a strategy pursued by authors to lend public weight to their demands for a status reform. But the Congolese elite paid a high price for this discourse of perfectibility. The medialized discrepancy between is and ought resulted in a strict selection procedure, saturated by mistrust, for the awarding of *évolué* status.

In the shape of the Congolese associational landscape, chapter 5 addresses another crucial component of elite-making. The associations, under the patronage of missionaries and the colonial state, served the aspiring elite as a means of network-building, prestige-attainment and distinction *vis-à-vis* the uneducated

majority of society. In addition, like the press, the associations were a mainstay of a public sphere that facilitated both empowerment and control by the colonial state. Following a general look at the foundation, objectives and activities of the associations, which were promoted by the colonial state, I present select case studies. The analytical linkage of discourse and practice demonstrates that associational sociability not only led to the desired socialization and disciplining of the Congolese elite, but also to rivalries and tensions within this elite and between it and the representatives of the colonial state. Finally, by revealing that Congolese sociability could have its own unique character, I point up the limits of the colonial state's control of the elite's free time.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the appointing of the elite through the selective issuance of *évolué* status, which was subject to contentious debate for several years and was institutionalized in the form of the *carte du mérite civique* and *immatriculation*. This chapter begins with the genesis of immatriculation, which triggered intense debate within the colonial public sphere as the second stage of the status reform. Much as with the *carte du mérite civique*, it was pushed through in the face of resistance within the settlers' milieu, whose members began to organize themselves throughout the colony in the wake of the debate on assimilation. I then examine the legal benefits of the two status reforms, bringing out the differences and shared elements of the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation. The focus of the chapter then shifts to the awarding committees. With the help of case studies, I reconstruct the application process and mechanisms of selection. In deciding whether to issue a *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation, this section argues, the awarding committees converted the traits of "genuine" *évolués*, as negotiated and propagated in the media, into bureaucratic test criteria. The applicants sought, with varying degrees of success, to boost their chances through the performance of cultural bourgeoisification. I go on to scrutinize the social profile of applicants for, and holders of, the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation. Their negligible utility was out of all proportion to the work candidates for *évolué* status had to put in to qualify for them, and the meagre benefits frustrated Congolese authors' great expectations.

The elite's constant disappointments at the status reforms are the object of chapter 7. Incidents in which the colonial authorities behaved disrespectfully towards holders of *évolué* status ran counter to the Belgian-Congolese Community proclaimed by the colonial state, which the elite was supposed to help construct. I compare this Community with reforms to the political association between colony and metropole pursued by other European imperial powers from 1945 onwards. I also examine initiatives through which the colonial state sought to give expression to this new social order. One of the main reasons why the vision of a Belgian-Congolese Community became less appealing to the elite was the

colonial state's upholding of legal inequality between Europeans and Africans. Finally, I show that, in the form of the School War, a political crisis that engulfed Belgium in the mid-1950s spread to the Belgian Congo. As a result, sections of the elite became politized and readily joined in the nascent debate on independence.

Chapter 8 is dedicated to the centrifugal forces of decolonization between 1957 and independence in 1960. It explores how the elite, so close to the colonial state, spearheaded politicization in the Belgian Congo at a moment when the colonial system in general came under pressure. The newly introduced mayoral elections were a catalyst for the fragmentation and ethnicization of the urban *évolué* milieu. In light of the changed press landscape, I elucidate the fact that the reforms facilitating political participation went hand in hand with growing anti-colonial agitation, in the wake of which the colonial state's elite-making policy was discredited. I then turn to the emergence of political parties led by former representatives of the Congolese elite, paying particular attention to their internal conflicts with respect to the country's political future and territorial form. Despite their differences, these political parties managed to pressure the Belgian government into abandoning its strategy of gradual decolonization in favour of immediate independence. After providing an account of the election campaign and detailing the first cabinet, in which the *évolué* generation dominated, the chapter concludes with the Congo Crisis and discusses the extent to which we can view the post-colonial chaos as a consequence of Belgian elite-making policy.

The conclusion brings together the findings of the present study and discusses the characteristic features of Congolese elite formation and Belgian developmental colonialism. I also bring out the ambivalences of cultural bourgeoisification in the colonial situation. While in Europe being a bourgeois citizen meant becoming one, being *évolué* meant that this was never going to happen. In order to preserve colonial hierarchies, the "development" of the Congolese elite was viewed as a permanent state of affairs. As unappreciated model pupils of the Belgian civilizing mission, the *évolués* are both a component in the global history of the bourgeoisie in the imperial age – and the immanent reverse image of this bourgeoisie. The bare feet in the photograph discussed at the start of this introduction thus symbolize the *évolués*' place at the margins of the global bourgeoisie.

Belgian colonial rule and lagging elite formation

The hesitant colonial power (1908–1940)

The Belgians were in many ways "reluctant colonialists."[1] The Belgian Empire comprised just one geographically contiguous colonial territory, fifty-seven times the size of Belgium, with a linguistically, ethnically and culturally heterogeneous population totalling eleven million people prior to the First World War.[2] Situated in the middle of the African continent, the Congo bordered on the territories of other European imperial powers, arousing expansionist desires.[3] The Congo Free State, established in the wake of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, was initially the private endeavour of Belgian King Leopold II; leading states tolerated it while keeping a critical eye on it. The atrocities in the Congo caused indignation around the world,[4] captured iconographically in images of Congolese with their hands cut off. Leopold II's Congo Free State thus became the epitome of a murderous, exploitative state. This reign of terror was a liability inherited by the Belgian state when it took over the territory in 1908. Henceforth, the major European imperial powers questioned Belgium's moral and material capacity for "effective occupation"[5] and its supposed civilizing mission. The Belgian Congo was a nervous colonial state[6] fearful of interference from the other colonial powers.

In light of the international controversies over the Belgian Congo, in the metropole Belgian colonial policy aimed to achieve consensus. Only during the era of the Free State under Leopold II and on the eve of the Belgian state's takeover

1 M. Ewens, "Belgium and the Colonial Experience," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 11, no. 2 (2003): 167.

2 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 29.

3 To the south, east and northeast of the Belgian Congo lay the British territories in Northern Rhodesia, Uganda and Sudan, to the northwest French Equatorial Africa, and to the southwest Angola, a Portuguese possession; in the east the colony bordered on German East Africa, of which Burundi and Rwanda were entrusted to Belgium as a protectorate after the First World War.

4 In addition to the killing of Lumumba, the Congo atrocities are among the best-researched topics in the history of the Belgian Congo. A major debate was ignited in the late 1990s by A. Hochschild's international bestseller *King Léopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London: Mariner Books, 1998).

5 To cite the term used for the European powers' sovereignty over the colonized territories of Africa since the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. M. E. Chamberlaine, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Routledge, 1974), 54.

6 Hunt, *Nervous*.

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in 1908 did political conflicts and parliamentary discussions of colonial issues provoke heated debates; until 1945 these were limited to scattered criticisms, such as those aired by the *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (POB) in the inter-war period, which assailed the harsh methods used to recruit workers for the colonial economy as a perpetuation of Leopold II's rule.[7] Belgium's parliamentary system amounted to a "pacifying" democracy that necessitated coalition governments and cross-party trade-offs. The notion of the "Belgian compromise"[8] can be taken quite literally. A confessional party, the *Parti Catholique*, was founded during the late nineteenth-century struggles between Liberals and the Catholic Church over religious schooling, and for lengthy periods this party cooperated with the *Parti Libéral* to form coalition governments. Both sought to achieve a "party truce" not just when it came to education policy but with respect to colonial policy as well.

The Belgian political parties were of one mind in seeking to keep metropolitan conflicts out of the colony. Even the opposition POB supported the colonial project, shared the view that the people of the Congo were among the "most primitive" in Africa and believed it was Belgium's duty to civilize them. It did call for improved living conditions and social progress, but put forward no programme of its own.[9] The anticolonial movement in Belgium was weak in comparison with that in France and Great Britain.[10] Though the *Parti Communiste de Belgique* (PCB), founded in 1921, had less political influence in the inter-war period than its counterparts in other European countries, the Belgian government feared infiltration of its colony. PCB representatives were forbidden from travelling to the Congo and their attempts to export propaganda from Antwerp with the help of Congolese sailors were unsuccessful.[11] Given that the Congolese, with a few exceptions, were prohibited from entering the metropole, in contrast to the situation in France and Great Britain no anti-imperial movement that might have radiated its ideas to the colonies got off the ground among workers, former soldiers or students from the colonies.[12] In the First World War Belgium

7 Seibert, *Globale Wirtschaft*.

8 M. Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium. Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6.

9 G. Vanthemsche, "De *Belgische socialisten* en Congo," Brood en Rozen 4 (1999).

10 On the anticolonial movement in inter-war Belgium, see L. Kottos, "L'anticolonialisme de gauche en Belgique durant l'entre-deux-guerres (1917–1939)" (Master's thesis, Université Libre Bruxelles, Brussels, 2005).

11 B. Verhaegen, "Communisme et anticommunisme au Congo (1920–1960)," Brood en Rozen 4 (1999).

12 On the anti-imperial milieu in Paris, see M. Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropole. Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), on Lon-

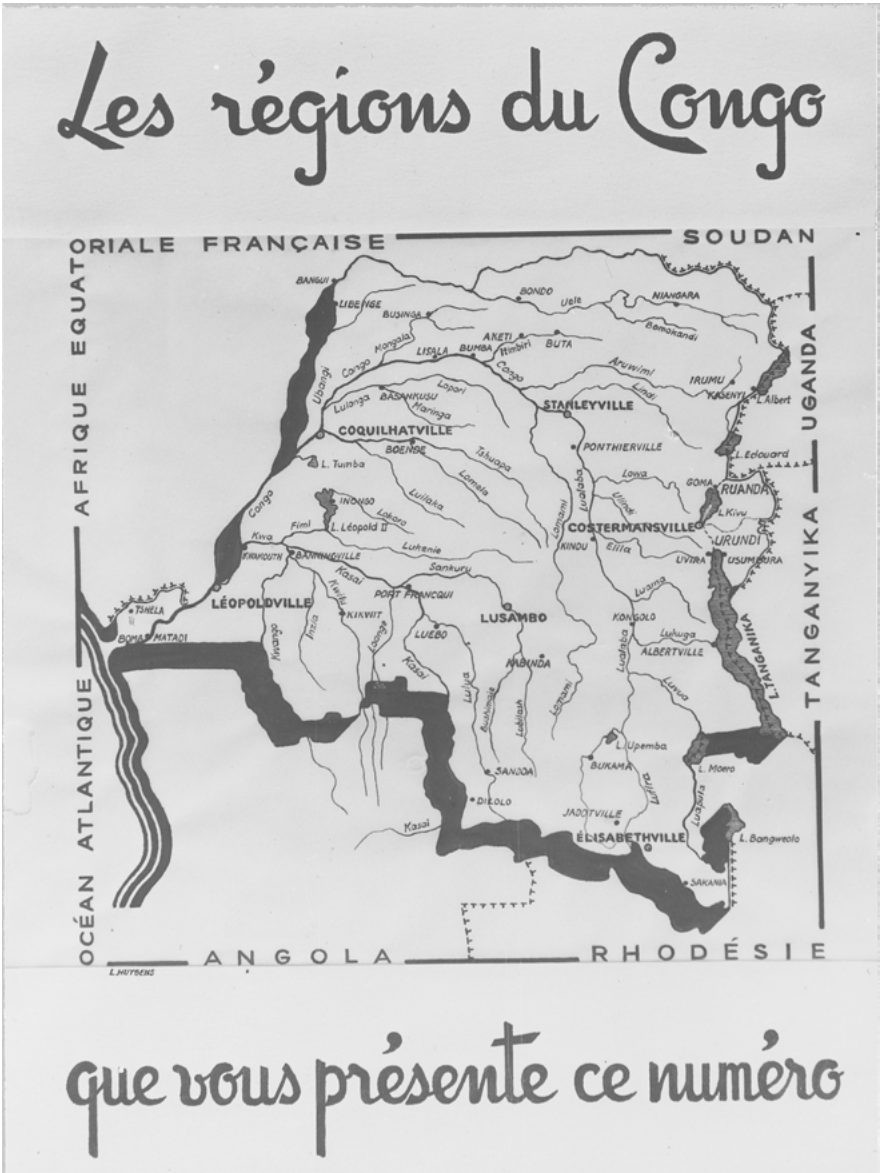

Fig. 2: The Belgian Congo, showing cities and adjacent colonies, 1946.

don see Prais, "Imperial Travelers"; M. Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropole and Decolonization in the 20th Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

had deployed Congolese soldiers exclusively in Africa. The Belgian Congo was thus shielded from external influences by a *cordon sanitaire*.[13]

Furthermore, the Belgian Congo's system of rule and administration was highly centralized and the preserve of a small group of actors. The colony's political course was determined by the Colonial Ministry in Brussels, whose decisions had the force of law in the Congo.[14] During the years of the coalition between Liberals and Catholics, which lasted from 1908 to 1945, it was the *Parti Catholique* that, with the exception of a five-year period, was in charge of the Colonial Ministry.[15] The party saw itself as the protector of Belgium's Catholic missions, which maintained hospitals and schools in the Congo as well as churches and whose establishment in the Free State King Leopold II had prioritised over the Protestant, mostly Anglo-Saxon competition. The predominance of the Catholic milieu in colonial policy extended to the centralized administrative apparatus below the ministerial level. The General Government in Léopoldville, nominally endowed with a small degree of executive power,[16] and the provincial administrations, subject to the directives emanating from Léopoldville, were also a "bastion of Catholicism."[17] The same applied to the civil servants working in the local administrative units in the districts and territories.[18]

The Belgian parliament took little interest in colonial issues and failed to supervise the budget as set out in the *Charte coloniale*, a set of agreements enacted in 1908.[19] The parliamentarians had approved the state's takeover of the Congo in 1908 on the premise that it would not be a burden on the national treasury.[20] The colony was financed exclusively from taxes levied on firms from Belgium, most of which were partly state-owned and had been active there since the days of the Free State. One consequence of the latter's concessionary policy was the development in the Belgian Congo of a capital-intensive colonial econ-

13 Verhaegen, "Communisme," 115.

14 G. Vanthemsche, "The Belgian Colonial Empire (1885/1908 – 06)," in *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte. Epochenübergreifende und globalhistorische Vergleiche*, eds. M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 977.

15 M. D. Markowitz, *Cross and Sword. The Political Role of Christian Missions in the Belgian Congo, 1908 – 1960* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), 21 – 22.

16 Vanthemsche, "Belgian Colonial Empire," 978. Of the staff of the General Government 90 percent were Catholics in the early 1950s; Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 26.

17 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 44.

18 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 26 – 28.

19 C. Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 161.

20 J.-L. Vellut, "Hégemonies en construction. Articulations entre État et entreprises dans le bloc colonial belge (1908 – 1960)," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 16 (1982), 314.

omy featuring "islands of industrialization,"[21] olive and cotton plantations, copper and gold mines, as well as companies dedicated to the construction of the requisite transportation and communication infrastructure. In the southern province of Katanga, a highly profitable mining sector emerged under the aegis of the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga* (UMHK),[22] whose high tax payments helped finance economically weaker regions.

The Belgian Congo was ruled, in a case of largely conflict-free cooperation, by a small group of officials from the Colonial Ministry in Brussels and the colonial administration, together with representatives of the Catholic missions and private companies.[23] This "colonial bloc"[24] also dominated the *Conseil Colonial*, a fourteen-member advisory body appointed by the parliament and the king and including, in addition to politicians from the *Parti Catholique* and *Parti Libéral*, missionaries, former colonial officials and business representatives from the Congo.[25] This form of colonial rule lacking in political oversight was also characterized by a dearth of political participation and input within the colony itself. While the French inter-war parliament at least featured elected representatives from Senegal,[26] the population in Belgian colonial territories was excluded from the political process due to their supposed immaturity and uncivilized nature. But the European inhabitants of the colony also had little political say.[27] Even Belgian citizens were denied the right to vote for the duration of their stay in the Congo.[28] The members of the *Conseil de Gouvernement* and *Conseil de Province*, established in 1914, which advised the colonial government on legislative matters, were not elected but appointed by the colonial government. Until the end of the Second World War these bodies were the preserve of colonial officials. The small number of Europeans in the Congo stood at just under 7,000 in 1920 and did not exceed 25,000 individuals by the end of the Second World War.[29] Of the 33,787 Europeans living in the Congo in 1946, 70 percent came from Belgium, half of them women and children. The 16,708 European men consisted of 3,287 colonial officials, 1,996 missionaries, 8,683 white-collar workers in

21 Seibert, *Globale Wirtschaft*, 178.
22 Ibid., 117 – 118.
23 Vanthemsche, "Belgian Colonial Empire," 977.
24 Vellut, "Hégémonies."
25 Young, *Politics*, 24 – 25.
26 Cooper, *Citizenship*, 6 – 7.
27 R. von Albertini, *Dekolonisation. Die Diskussion über Verwaltung und Zukunft der Kolonien 1919 – 1960* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1966), 573 – 574.
28 See B. Rubbers, *Faire fortune en Afrique. Anthropologie des derniers colons du Katanga* (Paris: Karthala, 2009), 227.
29 Young, *Politics*, 28; Vanthemsche, "Belgian Colonial Empire," 978.

businesses and merchants, and 2,772 settlers, including immigrants active in the retail trade and in skilled crafts and trades, particularly from Greece, Switzerland and Scandinavia.[30] The European population was concentrated in Léopoldville and those provinces with major industries. The first calls for political participation came in the 1920s in the Katanga province, which had formerly enjoyed an administrative status independent of the General Government.[31] The self-confidence of the Europeans in this economically strong centre of the copper industry was bolstered by the increasing power of the settlers in the British territories of Rhodesia and South Africa, which bordered the colony to the south.[32] Many of those living in Elisabethville, the provincial capital of Katanga and the headquarters of the UMHK, maintained close links with the settler colonies of southern Africa. A large number of Britons were resident in the city, while railway lines led to Northern Rhodesia and to the coast of the Portuguese colony of Angola. The colonial capital of Léopoldville, meanwhile, seemed far away. The fact that the latter was the seat of government while the Belgian Congo was largely financed by the province of Katanga was a source of resentment and stoked desires for greater autonomy. But the settlers' demands fell on deaf ears in Brussels.[33]

Belgian colonial policy envisaged the granting of direct political participation to Europeans only when Congolese were endowed with the same privilege, but the latter were regarded as woefully lacking in the requisite civilizational maturity. This political disenfranchisement of the colonial society was rooted in the pronounced paternalism of Belgian colonial rule. In the early 1930s, leading Belgian colonial politician and Governor General Pierre Ryckmans justified colonial conquest with reference to the "to rule is to serve" doctrine: "To serve Africa is to civilize it [...] until the work is done and [foreign] dominion is no longer necessary."[34] The architects of Belgian colonial policy, for power-political reasons, were keen on a protracted process of civilizational maturing: they were in no rush to recognize the colonial society as politically mature. This is especially evident in the education system, which pursued the gradual development of the Af-

30 "Rapport de l'Administration de la Colonie et du Congo Belge pendant les années 1945 – 1946 présenté aux Chambres Législatives," quoted in De Schrevel, *Forces politiques*, 52. There are differences between the population statistics produced by various state authorities. The annual statistics for 1945, for example, give a figure of 36,808 Europeans, 3,837 of them missionaries; G. Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo* (Brussels: Parole Silence, 2007), 404.

31 Lemarchand, *Political*, 60.

32 Ibid., 81.

33 Young, *Politics*, 45.

34 P. Ryckmans, *Dominer pour servir* (Brussels: Éditions universelles, 1948), 6 – 7.

rican population as a whole.[35] Leopold II had already granted responsibility for education to Catholic missionary orders of Belgian provenance, thus attaining the political goodwill of the governing *Parti Catholique vis-à-vis* his Free State. With its commitment to the Belgian annexation of the Free State and its later takeover of the Colonial Ministry, henceforth the *Parti Catholique* secured a vast and exclusive sphere of activity for the missionary movement, which had been gaining in strength since the 1860s.[36] Whereas in the British colonies mission schools were tasked with implementing programmes of public education, the Belgian authorities gave the predominantly Catholic missionaries free rein.[37] Though Liberals and Catholics had traded fire over the Catholic Church's leading role in education in the Belgium of the 1880s,[38] even anticlerical representatives of the *Parti Libéral* accepted the missions' monopoly in colonial schooling.[39] When it came to the affairs of the Congolese population, the *Parti Libéral* largely failed to live up to its name, putting its faith in the mission schools' educational and moral competence to furnish the colonial economy with capable workers.[40] The party viewed Catholicism as a social binding agent and aid to political stabilization, akin to its role in Belgian history. With its linguistic bipolarity reflecting its Walloon and Flemish communities, the country's foundation and unification had rested on the shared Catholic faith, in addition to a strong national bourgeoisie.[41] By favouring Catholic orders from Belgium, which were the near-exclusive recipients of state subsidies after 1908,[42] the Belgian political establishment aimed to give the civilizing mission in the Congo a national stamp.[43]

The Congo missions' educational assignment stood in the tradition of the Belgian school system, which had been predominantly Catholic since the mid-nineteenth century,[44] a state of affairs that had only briefly come up for debate during the Europe-wide "culture war" of the 1880s. The miners' strikes of 1886 demonstrated to the Belgian state the importance of inculcating, through universal schooling, the next generation of the working class with bourgeois notions of

35 Young, *Politics*, 36 – 42.
36 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 65.
37 Stengers, *Congo*, 205 – 220.
38 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 34.
39 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 21–22.
40 Ibid., 12.
41 Conway, *Sorrows*, 381; M. Conway, "Belgium," in *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918 – 1965*, eds. T. Buchanan and M. Conway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 189.
42 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 8.
43 Ibid., 55.
44 Stengers, *Congo*, 196; B. A. Cook, *Belgium: A History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 78 – 79.

morality and Catholic humility in order to curb their revolutionary potential. Through a curriculum intended to help produce compliant citizens, the political elites sought to cultivate faith in the authorities and an ascetic work ethic, while also putting a brake on the growing socialist movement. In keeping with the motto "to teach is good, to impart morality is better,"[45] Belgian pupils received a church-run form of teacher-centered learning whose "cult of order"[46] was focused more on socialization, moralization and disciplining than on enhancing knowledge or encouraging independent thought.[47] The mission schools in the Congo in particular took on the air of institutions of morality, in which children were to be shaped into obedient colonial subjects of Catholic faith who would fit neatly into the colonial order.[48]

The takeover of the Congo by the Belgian state led to the carefully managed expansion of the colonial education system. Education commissions were convened and these advocated continuing, and expanding on, the approach taken under the Free State. A comprehensive and mission-based programme of primary schooling in indigenous languages was to continue to ensure the moral education of the population.[49] Even Louis Franck, Liberal colonial minister and well-known agnostic, was convinced that moral education must go hand in hand with evangelization. Congolese, he believed, must convert to the Catholic faith, leaving their traditional spirituality behind them, which would guarantee a higher level of morality.[50] With the expansion of the educational landscape, the number of Belgian missionaries in the Congo increased dramatically. In 1908 just 335 such individuals were present in the territory, but by 1927 this figure had increased fivefold, and the latter figure had increased ten times over by

45 Article published in the Belgian press in 1899, quoted in C. Reimann, *Schule für Verfassungsbürger? Die Bildungsligen und der Verfassungswandel des späten 19. Jahrhunderts in Belgien, England und Frankreich* (Münster: Waxmann, 2016), 203.

46 S. Van Ruyskensvelde et al., "The Cult of Order: In Search of Underlying Patterns of the Colonial and Neo-Colonial 'Grammar of Educationalisation' in the Belgian Congo. Exported School Rituals and Routines?," *Paedagogica Historica* 53 (2017).

47 M. Depaepe and K. Hulstaert, "Creating Cultural Hybridity by Exporting Metropolitan Structures and Cultures of Schooling and Educationalisation? The Emergence of a Congolese 'Elite' in the 1950s as a Starting Point for Further Research," *European Educational Research Journal* 12, no. 2 (2013): 202.

48 Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 89.

49 M. Depaepe, "Sous le signe du paternalisme: les politiques éducatives au Congo belge, 1908–1960," in *L'école et la nation*, eds. B. Falaize et al. (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2010), 6.

50 Van Ruyskensvelde et al., "The Cult of Order"; Nziem, *Histoire générale*, 402.

1939.[51] In the 1930s there were more missionaries than colonial officials in the Belgian Congo.

In addition, colonial education policy was rooted in racist ideas that assumed that Africans were intellectually deficient. Senior representatives of missionary orders and the colonial administration thus categorically ruled out comprehensive teaching in French, citing this supposedly limited ability for advanced thought.[52] The missionaries, most of them from rural Flanders,[53] also welcomed a system of primary education in vernacular languages. They perceived the exclusive use of French by the colonial administration as an import of Belgium's national cultural and linguistic policies, which systematically suppressed the Flemish language.[54] The primary educational task was to provide manually trained workers. In the trenchant words of Liberal colonial minister Franck, the goal was not "to create an imitation of Europeans, a black Belgian, but rather a better Congolese, [...] healthy and hard-working [...], aware of his obligations to his fellows and to authority."[55]

In the late 1920s the Congolese educational landscape featured two years of primary education that imparted basic knowledge of arithmetic, writing and reading in vernacular languages, hygiene regulations, obedience to authority, and the Catholic faith. A small fraction of primary school children were girls, and even in 1960 they made up less than 20 percent,[56] so that the Belgian Congo placed last when it came to the literacy of women in colonial Africa. Most pupils were boys, who were also trained in basic manual work. Yet, the first stage of primary education was marked by a high degree of social penetration, encompassing one in ten children in 1926, one in four in 1932 and half of all children in 1946.

A second stage of primary education was provided by the larger mission stations and institutions established in urban settlements for a small group of the best pupils. By 1933, this group comprised no more than 10 percent of children enrolled in primary school, a figure that had risen to one in five 10 years later.[57]

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51 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 404.

52 Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 85.

53 Eight out of ten missionaries were from Flanders in 1948. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 63.

54 Stengers, *Congo*, 218. On the position of the Flemish language in Belgium's development as a nation, see Cook, *Belgium*, 80 – 84.

55 L. Franck, *Le Congo belge* (Brussels: La Renaissance du livre, 1930), 282.

56 B. Yates, "Church, State and Education in Belgian Congo," in *Women's Education in the Third World: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. G. P. Kelly and C. M. Elliott (Albany: Suny Press, 1983), 143.

57 Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 89.

This stage of education lasted for another three years and was divided by gender. The curriculum for boys focused on deepening manual skills and included additional subjects such as history and geography and, for the first time, French, which was compulsory in the cities and optional in the rural areas. This educational stage prepared pupils for life in a colonial working world and imparted a new gendered order: while boys' schools trained their pupils for agricultural and artisanal wage labour and for secondary schools, the girls' schools prepared their charges for the roles of mother and housewife, with lessons in sewing, handicrafts and childcare. The Catholic mission schools propagated the concept of monogamous and patriarchal nuclear families featuring a bourgeois division of labour and domesticity. This gendered order was in part an attempt to counter the polygamy dominant throughout the Congo, which the missionaries regarded as a sign of a lack of civilization and heathenism. Furthermore, women were to be ousted from their traditional agricultural activities,[58] conventionally regarded as unmasculine,[59] in favour of male wage labourers. A vanishingly small proportion of the female population attended those educational institutions that went beyond the primary level and that helped cement the new gender relations. There girls either learned to grow vegetables and medicinal plants for domestic use or were trained to work as primary school teachers or assistants to European social workers who provided housekeeping courses for married Congolese women.[60]

But even the secondary school syllabus for the male population was very limited and reflected the colonial administration's and companies' demand for qualified personnel. Here one in a hundred schoolchildren were trained as intermediaries for the colony.[61] The *écoles moyennes* produced secretarial assistants, who were trained, in French, in bookkeeping and typewriting. The largest group – between 54 percent and 74 percent – was made up of pupils attending the *écoles normales*, which met the growing need for primary school teachers, taught the requisite know-how but were not intellectually stimulating. The specialized *écoles professionelles* chiefly produced workers such as carpenters, farmers and masons, who were later deployed as foremen. In addition, from the mid-1920s onwards a handful of schools were founded for doctor's assistants, who worked in mission-run medical centres and hospitals after three to four years of education.[62] The two-tier seminaries provided the highest level of educational attainment possible, as the authorities did not envisage a university education

58 Yates, "State and Education," 130.
59 Gondola, *Tropical*, 12.
60 Yates, "State and Education," 137.
61 Expressed in figures: a total of 1,256 in 1929 and 3,630 in 1943. See Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 89.
62 On this paragraph, see ibid., 104–120.

for Congolese. By 1945, a total of 1,111 Congolese had attended the six-year *petit séminaire*, with its focus on Latin and the humanities, while 221 had studied at the *grand séminaire*, with its eight-year education in philosophy and theology. The fact that only one in twelve seminary graduates entered into church service shows that Congolese wishing to obtain a higher level of education and lucrative employment sometimes feigned a desire to dedicate their lives to God. British and French colonial policy set far greater store by higher education. In the inter-war period in Dakar, Lagos, Accra and elsewhere elite educational institutions emerged that produced African cadres for colonial administration, while others studied at universities in Paris or London. Nonetheless, the rate of school enrolment in the Belgian Congo was markedly higher than in French and British Africa. In the 1930s, a figure of 15 percent in the Congo contrasted with less than 4 percent in French West Africa.[63] The British Gold Coast did not reach this level until the late 1940s.[64] Hence upon independence the Belgian Congo was the African country with the greatest number of primary school children and priests, making up a third of the clergy of the entire continent. Yet it also had the smallest number of university graduates. Upon independence, fifteen Congolese were studying in Belgium, while another thirty had a degree awarded by one of the two universities in the Belgian Congo, which opened their doors in the mid-1950s.[65]

The conscious decision to forego the development of an educated intellectual elite was rooted in a fear Belgium shared with other European colonial states, namely that the members of such an elite might be in a position to manipulate an African society they now felt alienated from and to disseminate anticolonial ideas. In the 1920s Belgian politicians dedicated to colonial policy in the *Parti Catholique* and *Parti Libéral* felt that the politicization of intellectuals in the British and French empires had borne out their fears that this group might be susceptible to pan-Africanist and communist ideologies.[66] As they saw it, to educate Africans was to risk deforming and miseducating them. The mission-run further education of several Congolese intermediaries for subordinate positions within the colonial administration, companies and schools, meanwhile, was accepted as a "necessary evil."[67]

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63 J. Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus. Geschichte – Formen – Folgen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997), 107.

64 See B. G. George, *Education in Ghana* (Washington: ERIC Clearinghouse, 1976), 208.

65 Young, *Politics*, 200 and 280.

66 Stengers, *Congo,* 216; Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 69.

67 D. Dibwe dia Mwenbu, "La formation des élites coloniales. Le cas de la province Katanga," in *Le manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Élites congolaises et sociétés coloniales. Regards croisées*, ed. N. Tousignant (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2009), 118.

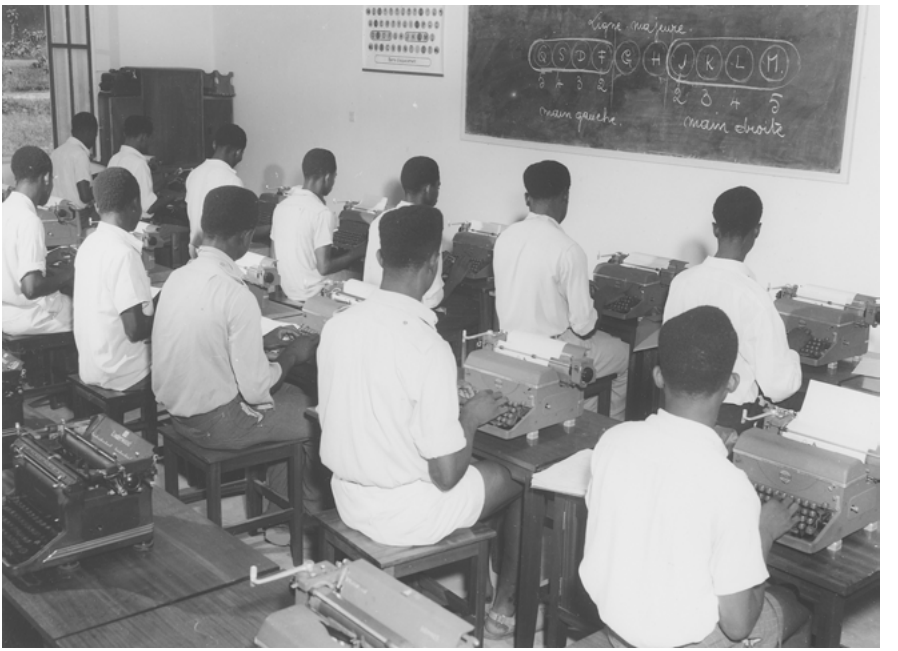

Fig. 3: Pupils at the *école moyenne* in Coquilhatville.

In the inter-war period, the combination of comprehensive primary education and a very limited form of secondary education was paralleled by a debate on the ramifications, and desired scope, of the associated transformation of African society. In general terms the European colonial powers questioned how far their alleged civilizing mission ought to go.[68] We can discern two ideal-typical schools of thought here. The ideology dominant among missionaries and colonial officials assumed the primacy and superiority of European civilization: Africans must compensate for their backwardness through cultural assimilation. After the First World War an indigenist strand of thought argued against this postulate of assimilation and called for greater efforts to preserve indigenous institutions and ways of life. The method of indirect rule, introduced around the same time in British colonial territories, reflects the prominence of this phenomenon in the inter-war period. Supporters of both ideologies were to be found among the Belgian missionary orders as well as among politicians dedicated to colonial policy. A *modus vivendi* took hold that propagated a form of selective adaptation. The idea here was that African culture contained elements worth preserving but

68 Eckert, "Kolonialismus, Moderne," 64–65.

also those that must be supplanted by a Catholic-bourgeois value system. Polygamy was the most significant example of a feature that Belgian missionaries sought to combat as un-Christian and uncivilized. In practice, the thesis of adaptation proved to be a malleable and contradictory form of the postulate of assimilation: the more educated Congolese were, the more vehement the calls for cultural adaptation to Christian-bourgeois moral notions became, while the shift away from the traditional milieu was lamented ever more vociferously.

The missionaries, of course, tended to discern threats to Congolese society in the way people lived outside of school rather than in their own evangelization and schooling. They were particularly concerned about Congolese in the cities, home not just to ordinary workers but also to many graduates of post-primary schools who found work in the administrative system and companies.[69] Between 1924 and 1929, the population of Léopoldville alone doubled as a result of the inflow of workers, to 46,000. Large companies had established branches there, including palm oil producers from Belgium and Great Britain, textile and drinks factories, as well as private and state-run transportation companies. The highly regarded missionary Joseph Van Wing assailed the miserable living conditions in the overcrowded, unsanitary districts, where Africans lived in jerry-built structures.[70] For Van Wing, who was in charge of a number of Jesuit mission schools in the vicinity of Kinshasa, the cities were sites of deracination where neither the instruments of missionary civilizing nor traditional rules held sway.[71] Four times as many Congolese men as women lived there. Only officially married women were granted residence, while their unmarried counterparts had to pay a substantial penalty tax. Despite this, as described by Van Wing, 93 percent of the women in Léopoldville were unmarried, and prostitution was widespread.[72] The missionaries' complaints about moral degradation and concerns about political unrest in the cities were echoed by the colonial officials. Over the course of the 1920s, these anxieties led to the missions' first attempts to achieve the extramural moralization and socialization of urban and educated Congolese. To understand this project, we must look at the social order in the metropole.

Since the late nineteenth century, Belgium's "patchwork society" had been based on the coexistence of social associations that reflected political and ideological conflicts and that organized social milieus on the basis of age, gender,

69 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 16 – 17.

70 Gondola, *Tropical*, 38 – 39.

71 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 17. For Van Wing's biography, see J. Denis, "J. Van Wing," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. VIII, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1998).

72 Gondola, *Tropical*, 90.

language, religion and social status.[73] The various so-called pillars consisted of interconnected organizations that were grouped around political parties and included trades unions, media, educational establishments, social insurance institutes and cultural associations. The most influential pillars with the greatest number of members were affiliated with the *Parti Catholique* and the BOP, while those associated with the *Parti Libéral* and the Flemish movement were less prominent. These pillars underlay the firmament of the Belgian state and established national unity amid social diversity. The political elites negotiated conflicts and sought compromises in close coordination with these pillared parallel societies.[74] The *Parti Catholique* had responded to the emergence of the BOP, founded in 1885, by erecting an extensive religious pillar: henceforth, the former party tried to defuse the "social question" thrown up by industrialization and proletarianization by means of catholic trades unions and co-operatives, as well as health insurance schemes.[75] Prior to the First World War, 40 percent of trades union members belonged to one of the Christian trades unions.[76] With their paternalistic clubs and societies, services for families, and recreational activities organized with the help of sporting and continuing education associations, the *Parti Catholique* and *Parti Libéral* sought to achieve the "moralization of the worker."[77] The imparting of "good manners" and familial models that were styled bourgeois or Catholic depending on one's political views,[78] and the concurrent improvement of Belgians' material lot, were attempts to stabilize the social and political order.

Given the consensus within the Belgian political class on the need to keep the Congo out of politics, there was no prospect that this pillarization, closely associated with the political parties, or the extramural moralization of Belgian society, would be transferred wholesale to the colonial context. Nonetheless, the colonial state and the missionaries recognized in this pillar-like structure useful building blocks for the construction of a milieu of educated Congolese. The Colonial Ministry thus granted the Belgian missions a monopoly of extramu-

73 Conway, *Sorrows*, 285.

74 D. Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880 – 1930. Peace, Progress and Prestige* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 84.

75 See P. Delwit and B. Hellings, "Du parti catholique au Centre démocrate humaniste. Les questionnements de la démocratie chrétienne en Belgique francophone," in *L'année sociale 2002*, ed. S. Béroud (Brussels: Éditions Syllepse, 2003).

76 Laqua, *Age of Internationalism*, 83.

77 J. Puissant, "Le bon ouvrier, mythe ou réalité du XIXe siècle. De l'utilité d'une biographie. J. F. J. Dauby (1824 – 1899)," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 56 (1979), 880.

78 T. Van Osselaer, *The Pious Sex. Catholic Constructions of Masculinity and Femininity in Belgium, 1800 – 1940* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), 78 – 80.

ral education as well, extending the Catholic movement, which was growing in strength in inter-war Belgium, to the colonial society.

Catholic Action was a movement proclaimed by Pope Pius XI in Europe after the First World War. It saw itself as a response to secularization, urbanization and social differentiation, which the Catholic Church perceived as a threat to its social hegemony.[79] In addition to the clergy, the Pope now urged the laity to play their part in the "Christianization of the world" and to join the battle against the "excesses of modern laicism."[80] Catholic Action spread from Italy across Western Europe and encompassed publishers, modern media and mass movements. In the 1920s it focused on recreational organizations for young people and, when the first generation had reached maturity, for adults as well. In much the same way as the established pillars of Belgian society, Catholic Action was split into subgroupings that divided labourers from peasants, men from women, boys from girls and Walloons from Flemings.[81] The apolitical character of Catholic Action, a result of its establishment in fascist Italy under Mussolini, prompted its members to turn their backs on political activities. This undermined the unity of the Catholic associational landscape, while the movement also brought together anti-parliamentary currents that at times accused the governing *Parti Catholique* of being overly liberal.[82]

This distance from the political parties, however, enabled Catholic Action to expand to the Belgian Congo. There the missionaries emulated the approach of *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* (JOC), which had been founded in Brussels in 1925 and was growing into a global organization. Its informing conviction was that there was a vital need to stop relying on men of the church to attend to the working class. Instead believing workers must be won over at a young age so that they might impart Christian values and a moral way of life within their own milieu.[83] Likewise, from now on the apostles to the Congolese were to be Congolese themselves. In keeping with missionaries' complaints about the immoral conduct of educated city dwellers, missionaries – especially those in charge of secondary schools – answered the Pope's call for Catholic action. Against the background

79 On the Catholic mission, see K. Große Kracht, "Missionsland Europa. Katholische Aktion und 'missionarische Bewegung' im französischen und deutschen Katholizismus der 1940er Jahre," *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2009), http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2009/Article=384 (24 September 2013).

80 Ibid., 2.

81 Van Osselaer, *Pious*, 181 and 380.

82 See T. Van Osselaer, "Christening Masculinity? Catholic Action and Men in Interwar Belgium," *Gender & History* 21, no. 2 (2009): 382–383.

83 See Große Kracht, "Missionsland," 3.

of "Catholic internationalism"[84] the missionaries acted on their own initiative and independent of the metropolitan structure.[85] In the late 1920s, the Belgian Scheut missionaries established an association in Léopoldville for former pupils of their training centre for office assistants, which soon included all graduates of the Scheut mission schools. An equivalent group was founded by the second major missionary order, the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes*, which was in charge, among other things, of the *Colonie Scolaire* at Boma in western Congo, an establishment that trained typists to meet the state's administrative needs. Both missionary orders distributed periodicals as well. In addition to religious content these provided information on individual school leavers and portrayed the "elite regiment of evangelization" as "good Christians," often pictured in suit and tie at their church weddings, with brides in white wedding dresses at their side.[86]

In 1931 a branch of the JOC was established in Léopoldville as well. A missionary of the Scheut order who was familiar with the movement from Belgium and believed it vital that it expand into the Congo[87] began to promote Christian monogamy among unmarried foremen, who were supposed to influence the urban workers as moral role models.[88] In the late 1930s, for a short time Léopoldville was home to the JOC's first women's section under the leadership of a Catholic nun, an organization that sought to prepare women for marriage and the life of a housewife. In the industrialized region of Katanga, an independent network of paternalistic recreational institutions with similar programmes was established through close cooperation between the UMHK and the Catholic Church. Coordinated by the local apostolic vicar, these sought to attract the large number of resident Congolese wage labourers.[89] At the behest of the company, which in the 1930s was keen to achieve a stable workforce,[90] the Belgian missionaries also gave lessons on the premises.[91]

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84 V. Viaene, "Vers une histoire de l'internationalisme catholique au XIXe siècle," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte* 100 (2006).

85 L. Van Rompaey, "The Development of the Catholic Youth Organizations in the Belgian Congo (1908–1960)," in *The Colonial Experience in Education. Historical Issues and Perspectives*, eds. A. Nóvoa and M. Depaepe (Gent: CSHP, 1995), 194.

86 Statements and images of this kind can be found in 1934 issues of *Signum Fidei*, an organ serving the graduates of the mission schools run by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes*.

87 R. Pasquier, *La jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne en Afrique noire (1930–1950)* (Paris: Karthala, 2013), 95–96.

88 Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 145.

89 Pasquier, *La jeunesse*, 98.

90 Seibert, *Globale Wirtschaft*, 203–206.

91 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 45.

Initially Catholic Action targeted only an elite group that was to be encouraged to live a moral life.[92] In both Belgium and in the Congo the gendered order this organization propagated was based on a patriarchal and bourgeois model that ascribed the task of evangelization to men. While men were to be active within the public sphere, women were allocated to the domestic sphere of the family and child-rearing.[93] For the activists of Catholic Action, the restoration of Belgium's Catholic society and the evangelization of the colonial society both depended on ensuring the prevalence of the ideal-typical bourgeois family.[94] Some militant Flemish divisions of the Belgian organization drew on the masculine ideals of an authoritarian *zeitgeist*, privileging the symbolism of Catholics as warriors and soldiers. This they did in significant part in order to circumvent the contemporaneous debate on religiosity as female terrain and to criticize the hegemony of the Francophone bourgeoisie within the *Parti Catholique*.[95] Nonetheless, the ideal of the Congolese believer was essentially that of a thoroughly obedient, pious and bourgeois man, the head of a patriarchal Christian family.

In Belgium Catholic Action was dedicated to the notion of "moral rearming," through which the Catholic Church sought to counter mass culture and sexual freedoms and to shore up a patriarchal gender-based order subject to increasing challenge.[96] To some extent Catholic Action was the confessional articulation of the process of "recasting bourgeois Europe"[97] immediately after the First World War, when Western European governments were injecting new vigour into the conservative vision of a bourgeois society. While the metropolitan society was supposed to return to an imagined bourgeois tradition, in the Congo this valorized bourgeois way of life was associated with a vision of a future society. To the representatives of Catholic Action, the Belgian Congo appeared to be a promising field of action. In contrast to Western Europe, it was free of political conflicts, popular culture, anticlerical critics and Communist subversives.[98] For these Catholic activists the small group of educated Congolese constituted the vanguard

92 Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 194.

93 Van Osselaer, "Christening," 385 – 386 and 391; Van Osselaer, *Pious*, 12 – 13 and 25 – 26; Conway, "Belgium," 190.

94 Van Osselaer, *Pious*, 80.

95 Van Osselaer, "Christening," 385 – 386.

96 M. Depaepe and K. Hulstaert, "Demythologising the Educational Past: An Attempt to Assess the Power of Education in the Congo (DRC) with a Nod to the History of Interwar Pedagogy in Catholic Flanders," *Paedagogica Historica* 51 (2015): 1 – 2 and 16 – 17.

97 C. S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975).

98 Depaepe and Hulstaert, "Demythologising," 16.

and apostles of a long-term civilizing mission that was gradually to render the ideas of the monogamy-based family, bourgeois virtues and gender roles compatible with the local society. Missionaries and politicians concerned with colonial policy shared the view that the civilizing mission was an important educational task, but it was not one that could be rushed. They were convinced that the population must be civilized steadily and very gradually, while the small number of reasonably educated Congolese must be pushed, under strict observation, to achieve a higher degree of assimilation.

Second World War, second colonization

During the Second World War several actors began to call for the reform of Belgium's colonial policy, questioning the legitimacy of its paternalistic attitude, tentative fostering of a Congolese elite, "depoliticization of colonial policy"[99] and efforts to seal the colony off from the rest of the world. The Second World War heralded the start of contradictory processes in colonial Africa. First, it made Africa far more important to the European colonial powers. While Great Britain could rely on the material and human resources of its entire empire, initially only French Equatorial Africa sided with the exile government under General Charles de Gaulle in London. The Allied invasion of southern Europe, however, was launched from French colonial territory, the Vichy regime having lost control of the country's African colonies in late 1942. Second, the world war induced international power shifts and triggered the emergence of new institutional frameworks, so that the European colonial powers felt compelled to carry out reforms and relaunch their colonial rule. Furthermore, the atrocities carried out by Nazi Germany and its subjugation of eastern Europe had discredited attempts to legitimize colonial rule based on race.[100] Other important developments were the rise of the United States to the status of world power and its government's increasingly critical stance towards colonialism, which had already found expression in the Atlantic Charter of August 1941; this affirmed the right of every people to elect its own government. Initially, however, the Charter was no more than rhetoric: "A policy of decolonization and coalition warfare were scarcely compatible."[101] This changed in June 1945 with the founding of the United Nations (UN), the direct heir to the League of Nations institutionally though

99 Albertini, *Dekolonisation*, 575.
100 Marx, *Geschichte Afrikas*, 247–253.
101 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 5.

not ideologically. While the latter body still recognized Europe's tutelage of the colonized parts of the world, paternalism now gave way to an agenda of emancipation, on which both the United States and the Soviet Union, along with the Eastern Bloc countries, insisted.[102] That the UN Charter by no means spelt the end of colonialism but merely ushered in its reform was due to a change of attitude on the part of the United States. Under its new president Harry S. Truman, the brewing confrontation with the USSR and the communist system prompted the United States to prioritize security policy over the freedom of peoples.[103] In the Charter independence became a mere slogan open to broad interpretation. In their trust territories and colonies, the colonial powers were supposed to lay the ground for self-government, which granted the vernacular population a political say but left colonial rule in place.[104] While the colonial states had no need to fear any interference in their sovereignty, henceforth they did have to report on their colonies' development to the specially created United Nations Trusteeship Council.[105] The yardstick here was provided by the commitments set out in Article 73 of the Charter: to advance the inhabitants' wellbeing, to foster social, economic and educational progress, and to promote self-government "according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement."[106]

While the European colonial powers now had to report back to the United Nations with updates on their colonial possessions, Great Britain and France were by no means minded to withdraw from Africa. Rather than decolonization, what they had in mind was "recolonization." Hence, before the war was over both imperial powers had announced far-reaching reforms based on the notion of "developing" their colonies: through state investment in modernization projects along with the introduction of the kind of welfare and social security programmes that had long since been established in the Western European mother countries.[107] Plans of this kind had certainly crossed the desks of the various co-

102 Ibid., 4.

103 G. Th. Mollin, *USA und der Kolonialismus. Amerika als Partner und Nachfolger der belgischen Macht in Afrika, 1939–1965* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 136.

104 On the influence of the British Colonial Office on the paragraphs concerning colonial rule in the UN Charter, see W. R. Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 691–692.

105 The following marks draw on Mollin, *USA und der Kolonialismus*, 143, 189 and 192–193. See also Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 135–140.

106 Charter of the United Nations, Chapter XI: Declaration regarding non-self-governing territories, Article 73.

107 For an introduction to this topic, see A. Eckert, *Exportschlager Wohlfahrtsstaat? Europäische Sozialstaatlichkeit und Kolonialismus in Afrika nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Bochum: Stif-

lonial ministries in the inter-war period. But they had rejected the idea of putting them into practice out of fear of the consequences of the associated processes of social transformation and in light of the premise that the colonial possessions must be financially self-supporting.[108] The post-war order and the pressure to lend new legitimacy to colonial rule brought these plans back onto the agenda. The so-called "second colonization of Africa"[109] encompassed a range of measures centred on programmes of state investment, along with social, economic and administrative reforms – a colonial policy that was not geared exclusively to advancing the metropole's economic interests but towards the needs of Africans as well. This socioeconomic approach was complemented by new and expanded opportunities for political participation within colonial society.[110] Developmental colonialism was supposed to help the population achieve "political maturity" and thus lay the foundation stones for independence.[111] Great Britain, for example, passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940 and sought to introduce the first forms of self-government in its African colonies after 1945.[112] From 1946, in the shape of the *Fonds pour l'investissement en développement économique et social*, France transferred funds from the metropole to the colonies to expand infrastructure and advance the welfare of the vernacular population.[113] And in 1944, while France was still under German occupation, at the Brazzaville Conference in French Equatorial Africa, which remained loyal to the exile government, General Charles de Gaulle announced his intention to integrate representatives of the African elite into the political structures of the metropole and to raise the living standards of France's colonial subjects.[114] The *Union Française*, which began to take shape over the next few years, promised

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tung Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets, 2007), 8; A. Eckert, "Wohlfahrtsmix, Sozialpolitik und 'Entwicklung' in Afrika im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Sozialpolitik in der Peripherie. Entwicklungsmuster und Wandel in Lateinamerika, Afrika, Asien und Osteuropa*, eds. J. Jäger et al. (Vienna: Südwind, 2001), 100–101 and 106–107. For a programmatic account, see Cooper, *Decolonization*, 16.

108 On the British colonies, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 101. On the French colonies, see Cooper, *Decolonization*, 176.

109 M. Crowder, "The Second World War: Prelude to Decolonisation in Africa," in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 8 c, *1940–1975*, ed. M. Crowder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 28. This term has become a standard feature of overviews of colonialism after 1945. Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus*, 45. "Second colonial occupation" is the phrase used for Britain's Africa policy after 1940 in Eckert, *Herrschen*, 97.

110 Osterhammel and Jansen, *Dekolonisation*, 41.

111 Eckert, "Spätkoloniale Herrschaft," 6.

112 For detailed information, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 103–110.

113 Cooper, *Decolonization*, 176.

114 Ibid., 176–182.

the inhabitants of the colonies, above all the *évolués*, that the Republican pledge of equality would be put into practice. De Gaulle's speech, in particular, conveyed to the Belgian colonial government across the Congo River the pressing need to take action.

Belgium certainly adopted elements of the French and British reforms but pursued continuity in its colonial policy and thus an apolitical form of colonial development. Through a tentative programme of reforms, politicians dedicated to colonial policy sought to ease internal conflicts and external tensions that had come to light during the war. When the war began it had initially been unclear whether the Belgian Congo would fall into the hands of the Allies or the Axis powers.[115] This was by no means a minor issue as the colony was of strategic importance to the war as one of the largest producers of raw materials, such as copper, in the world. As a result of the German occupation the Belgian government had gone into exile, but the king refused to stand shoulder to shoulder with Great Britain and France and remained in the country, intending to install a collaborationist regime. Only when representatives of Belgium's exile government had assured the Allies of access to the Congo's economic resources as a contribution to the war effort and the colonial minister had set up shop in London did Great Britain drop its plans to treat Congo as an independent state if necessary. That the Allies could count on the cooperation of the Belgian Congo was partly due to the strong position of Governor General Pierre Ryckmans, a Catholic jurist from Antwerp, who had been in office since the 1930s.[116] Contra the demands issuing from the European colonial population for loyalty to the Belgian king and strict neutrality, he argued in favour of supporting the war against Germany. Congo's military contribution, which saw the deployment of Belgian colonial troops of the *Force Publique* in Africa and Asia, remained marginal. But the production and export of rubber, palm oil and copper, which increased many times over, were important to the Allied war economy. The rare uranium used in the US-American nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima also came from the Belgian Congo.[117] Despite the colony's strategic role in the Allied war economy the relationship between Belgium and the United States was strained. The latter doubted that Belgian colonial policy was capable of reform and criticized the paternalism that it regarded as a key reason for the glaring neglect of the Congolese populace's cultural and political development.[118]

115 This section draws on Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 174–180.

116 On Ryckmans's biography, see J. Vandelinden, *Pierre Ryckmans. 1891–1959. Coloniser dans l'honneur* (Brussels: De Boeck Université, 1994).

117 See Mollin, *USA und der Kolonialismus*, 52–87.

118 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 135–140.

The future of the Belgian Congo was an issue that had already worried the colonial minister and the General Government during the Second World War. Unsurprisingly, in view of the impediments to communication between London and Léopoldville and the strengthened position of the governor general, the blueprint for a reformed colonial policy came from the colonial capital. During the war it became clear that Governor General Pierre Ryckmans was convinced of the reciprocal effects of state investment programmes and socioeconomic development. The first colonial minister of the post-war period, Edgar de Bruyne of the *Parti Catholique*, then announced a "great plan" for the economy and for the vernacular population to share in "Congolese riches."[119] He, however, held the position for just four months; in June 1945, the *Parti Catholique* found itself on the opposition benches for the first time in 60 years.

The Colonial Ministry went to the *Parti Libéral*, with Robert Godding appointed to the post of colonial minister. He was the only Belgian parliamentarian to have spent the war years in Léopoldville and as a close confidant of Governor General Ryckmans he had helped fine-tune the plans for post-war Congo. The nephew of Liberal colonial minister Louis Franck, Godding made a name for himself early on as an expert on the Congo and had been appointed to the *Conseil Colonial* in 1932.[120] Making reference to the UN Charter, in the shape of the *Fonds du Bien-Être Indigène*, Godding launched an initial development programme for the rural regions and established the *Fonds d'avance* to support housebuilding in Congolese urban districts.[121] However, he dropped plans to implement a comprehensive and state-run development programme: as a Liberal he was generally sceptical of state intervention in the economy and instead put his faith in private enterprise in the Congo.[122] Pierre Ryckmans, however, who had resigned as governor general in 1946 after 12 years in the post in order to defend Belgian colonial reforms as Belgium's envoy to the UN Trusteeship Council, continued to advocate such an investment plan. In a programmatic speech of farewell entitled "Towards the Future,"[123] he called for state investment in a programme of social and economic development in order to eliminate poverty among Congolese.[124] Another change of government in Belgium ended

119 G. Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée du "Plan Décennal" du Congo belge (1949–1959)* (Brussels: Académie Royale Science d'Outre-Mer, 1994), 11.

120 On Godding's biography, see E. Krings, "Robert Godding," in *Nouvelle biographie nationale*, vol. 9, ed. Académie Royale (Brussels: Académie Royale, 2007).

121 G. Brausch, *Belgian Administration in the Congo* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 66.

122 Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 11.

123 This is also the title of the Belgian Congo's official anthem.

124 Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 9.

Godding's period in office after two years in March 1947. The Colonial Ministry was handed back to the *Parti Catholique*, which had reinvented itself in the interim, to cross-confessional intent, as the *Parti Social Chrétien* (PSC). Colonial Minister Pierre Wigny now launched a large-scale, state-orchestrated programme intended to achieve the social and economic modernization of the colony. Charged with implementing it was Hendrik Cornelis, who had advocated pertinent reform projects during the war as a high official at the General Government's Economic Department. The so-called Ten-Year Plan was modelled on the development programmes recently launched in the French and British colonies but also on the US-American Marshall Plan for Western Europe.[125] The socially responsive welfare state in the metropole was to be paralleled by the caring colonial state.[126] Ryckmans saw this as the epitome of a reformed colonial project, from which both metropole and colony were to benefit: "The colonial endeavour is on the verge of its best days. [...] At the happy conclusion of our efforts there will be a civilized Congo developed to its own benefit, a more productive supplier to the motherland, a richer customer, an even more loyal child, the best-run colony in the world."[127]

In socioeconomic terms, through the Ten-Year Plan the Belgian Congo sought to emulate the developmental colonialism of the major colonial powers.[128] In contrast to Great Britain and France, which financed their development programmes in Africa with public funds from the metropole, the Belgian government issued loans out of the colony's budget,[129] which grew eleven times over in the first post-war decade as a result of the rise in commodity prices on the world market.[130] Under the governing coalition of the PSC and *Parti Socialiste Belge* (PSB), which had emerged out of the BOP during the war, the Ten-Year Plan came into force in 1949 with the primary objective of enhancing "indige-

125 Ryckmans, *Dominer pour servir*, 66 – 69. This section draws on the speech "Goals of Tomorrow," which Ryckmans gave in January 1948.

126 On the role of the welfare state in the emergence of middle classes in post-war Europe, see B. Vogel, *Die Staatsbedürftigkeit der Gesellschaft* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2007); D. Hilpert, *Wohlfahrtsstaat der Mittelschichten? Sozialpolitik und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1949 – 1975)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

127 Ryckmans, quoted in Mollin, *USA und der Kolonialismus*, 193. The key figures informing the thinking of the UK's Labour government in 1948 also saw its colonial policy as the beginning of a new era; Eckert, *Herrschen*, 104.

128 Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 9.

129 Ibid.

130 C. Young, "Imperial Endings and Small States: Disorderly Decolonization for the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal," in *The Ends of European Colonial empires. Cases and Comparisons*, eds. M.B. Jéronimo and A.C. Pinto (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 109.

nous welfare."[131] Colonial Minister Pierre Wigny maintained the paternalistic belief that he knew what was best for the Congolese population: "It is the state's duty to develop the indigenous society."[132] A yearly average of two and a half billion Belgian francs was made available for the Ten-Year Plan, equivalent to more than half the colony's annual budget hitherto.[133] One in two francs was spent on developing transport routes, while just under a quarter of the Ten-Year Plan budget was used to benefit Congolese, which meant training skilled workers, improving health care, living conditions and water supply, providing sanitation and building educational establishments.[134] Wigny saw the economic plan as a means of stabilizing colonial rule and as "the best way of ensuring the amity of the population over the long-term."[135] At the same time the Ten-Year Plan served as proof of the reformability of the Belgian colonial project *vis-à-vis* the international community. In addition, as Belgian historian Guy Vanthemsche argues, Belgium's colonial policy was informed by the hope that economic modernization would allow the country to avoid the agitation for political independence seen in other colonial territories in Africa.[136]

The question of the Belgian Congo's political development had certainly been debated during the war, as a result, once again, of the demands for autonomy issuing from the European population in the southern provinces. In Léopoldville this prompted Robert Godding to call for Belgians to be included in a legislative colonial council that would enjoy executive powers. The colonial minister in London, however, was a staunch opponent of political participation for the settlers.[137] After the war Governor General Ryckmans and Colonial Minister De Bruyne agreed not to implement an electoral system for Europeans. Instead, in July 1945 reforms were made to the existing consultative organs, the *Conseil de Gouvernement* and *Conseil de Province:* from now on representatives of the European population were to be appointed to these bodies in addition to colonial officials. In these forums Europeans were also responsible for African affairs; the first Congolese to be integrated into them, in 1947, were a priest and an elder who had not mastered the French language.[138] Even as colonial minister Robert Godd-

131 Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 16.
132 Ibid.
133 Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 37.
134 Ibid., 34–38. See Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 69; Mollin.
135 Pierre Wigny, quoted in Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 32.
136 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 144.
137 J. Brassinne de la Buissière and G.-H. Dumont, "Les autorités belges et la décolonisation du Congo," *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP* 18 (2010): 11.
138 Young, *Politics*, 28.

ing was open to the possibility of political decentralization. But under Christian Social leadership, from 1947 on Brussels categorically opposed the settlers' pursuit of autonomy, which had recently culminated in an apartheid state in South Africa.[139]

However, it was the delayed political participation of the Congolese population rather than the failure to politically integrate the white settlers that Belgium had to explain to the UN Trusteeship Council. At the United Nations Belgium presented itself as an unyielding colonial power. Former Governor General Pierre Ryckmans saw no contradiction between Belgian colonial policy and the new paradigm of colonial development. Very much in line with the international debate after 1945, he interpreted the issue of political participation for Africans as centered on the appropriate pace of decolonization, which must be geared towards colonial subjects' level of development in different areas. Ryckmans extolled the total emancipation of the Congolese people as the final, crowning achievement of colonialism. Certainly, they must be allowed to take control of their own affairs as soon as possible. But for Ryckmans the Congolese lacked the requisite political maturity. He asked the critical United States to show greater understanding for the special situation in the Congo. The territory could not, he asserted, be compared with the state of the Philippines when the United States took over from Spain as colonial rulers, as the latter had already civilized the population.[140] Ryckmans saw the United States' attitude as based on ignorance of the "profound state of savagery in which we found Africa."[141] Central Africa, Ryckmans contended, could not skip any developmental stages.[142] Even reform-oriented circles within British Africa policy sympathized with this perspective. They declared their central and east African territories unready for the kind of self-government that had already been introduced in Ghana and Nigeria.[143] In the debate on French post-war policy too, the proponents of an inclusive *Union Française* first had to prevail over those who insisted upon regionally variable civilizational levels among the vernacular population and who, once again, placed central Africa at the lower end of the scale.[144] Apologists for Belgian colonialism began to acquire a liking for the UN Charter with its nebulous pronouncements on the advancement of colonial subjects as appropriate to their stage of development.

139 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 82–83.
140 Ryckmans, *Dominer pour servir*, 54.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 106.
144 Cooper, *Citizenship*, 41.

Despite pressure from the international community the Ten-Year Plan had explicitly ruled out the political education of the colonial population. Colonial Minister Pierre Wigny declared to the Belgian parliament that "it would be absurd to try to set out in detail the development of the indigenous population's political institutions for the next ten years today."[145] The cross-party consensus in Belgium that Congolese ought to be excluded from political decision-making remained in place. While the labour government that took office in Great Britain in 1945 launched an ambitious programme to ensure the indigenous community's gradual participation in local elections and municipal self-government,[146] the PSB showed no comparable desire for reform despite forming part of the government. In the *Conseil Colonial*, where the party gained representation for the first time in 1945, it made no particular effort to emphasize the issue.[147] Even the PCB, which was part of the coalition government for two years immediately after the war, dropped its anticolonial stance in favour of a reformist one and joined the other parties in singing the praises of Belgium's colonial mission.[148] While the *Parti Catholique*, to which the Colonial Ministry had traditionally been entrusted, had set up a working group on the Belgian Congo immediately after its re-foundation as the PSC in order to debate the future relationship between metropole and colony, it was not until the early 1950s that it presented its first findings.[149]

Following Godding's two years in office as Liberal colonial minister, the PSC was once again in charge of colonial policy for several years and took office alone in 1950, re-establishing the old pre-war balance of power. Historian Martin Conway's observation that the PSC's assumption of power concluded a turbulent four-year post-war period, culminating in the restoration of a slightly modified social and political order, can be extended to colonial policy:[150] power remained centralized in Brussels, where a small group centred on the PSC made the key decisions. Parliamentary debates, meanwhile, gave the strong impression that Belgium had no colony. The paternalism of colonial rule, which had attracted such international opprobrium, survived through an apolitical developmental

145 Wigny, quoted in Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 32.

146 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 106. For more information on the Fabians' role in the political paradigm shift in the British Colonial Ministry, see R. Finsterhölzl, "The spirit of true socialism. Das Fabian Colonial Bureau und die koloniale Reformpolitik im subsaharischen Afrika," *ZfG* 58 (2012).

147 Vanthemsche, "Belgische socialisten." In a 1946 minority government the colonial minister came from the PSB for the first time, though he was in office for just six days.

148 Verhaegen, "Communisme," 115.

149 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 84.

150 Conway, *Sorrows*, 3–4.

colonialism that Belgium confidently presented to the world, its welfarist elements and state modernization programmes in keeping with the socio-political *zeitgeist* after 1945. The Belgian Congo's post-war sorrows appeared to have been banished by the well-meaning Ten-Year Plan.

Yet the conviction inherent in Belgian colonial policy that it could accelerate social and economic development in the Congo while simultaneously kicking political education into the long grass proved fallacious. The discrepancy between the depoliticized developmental colonialism in the Belgian Congo and the growing political participation of Africans in British and French colonies ensured that Belgian policy was caught off-guard by the domino effect of continental decolonization.[151] Ultimately, the "development" of colonial Africa turned out to mean development with unintended consequences. The rhetoric of development took on a momentum of its own and began to impact on society as soon as it went beyond the position papers and speeches of politicians concerned with colonial policy. Developmental colonialism opened a "Pandora's box" because the "shift away from order and stability" towards "development and progress" paved the way for new intermediaries.[152] Henceforth, much like other colonial powers, Belgium relied on the educated African population. Yet the rhetoric of development aroused great expectations among the members of this new collaborative elite. They hoped to finally gain a hearing for their demands for better living conditions and the right to the kind of political participation found in the European metropoles. The history of Belgian developmental colonialism, then, is also a history of this new collaborative elite and their expectations of colonial reforms, an elite whose very name articulated the dynamism and the contradictions of late colonial subject formation: the *évolués*.

Developmental elites

The Ten-Year Plan, inspired by elements of welfarist thought, formed only part of Belgian colonial policy's response to the challenges of the post-war era. Belgian developmental colonialism featured an additional, idiosyncratic component: its attempt to create an elite through a process of moral education. This was the centrepiece of a new policy that differed from British and French colonial reforms in Africa, first, in that it provided neither for growing political involvement at the local level, as in the British case, nor for legal-political integration into imperial

151 Osterhammel and Jansen, *Dekolonisation*, 77.
152 Marx, *Geschichte Afrikas*, 250.

structures as in the French case. Second, this elite-making policy, pursued for the first time by the state, stood out for its single-mindedness: more than ever, in the Belgian Congo elite formation meant moralization and the cultural appropriation of the Catholic-bourgeois precepts inherent in the civilizing mission. The postulate of assimilation was linked with the promise of gradual equality – in contrast with the French Empire, in which cultural difference was no longer regarded as an impediment to legal integration or political participation.[153] In common with the Portuguese territories in Africa, where the colonial subjects shared the fate of their counterparts in the metropolitan society in the sense that both were denied political rights under the internationally isolated dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar, Belgian colonial policy pursued a depoliticized and paternalistic reformist course.[154] From now on, then, the Belgian Congo lagged behind colonial developments in the British and French African empires. Nonetheless, despite the slow pace of development and the territory's politically imposed seclusion, for both the Congolese elites and Belgian politicians the post-war elite-making policy inspired a sense of new beginnings.

The Belgian Congo's integration into the Allied war economy had accelerated the social transformations of the inter-war period. Due to the war effort, between 1938 and 1945 the number of wage labourers had almost doubled to 800,000, an estimated 59 percent of the Congolese workforce.[155] A quarter of the male population was engaged in hard labour in mines, plantations and infrastructure projects.[156] The increased demand for labour also triggered rapid growth in urbanization. Before the war one in ten Congolese lived in urban settlements, while after it the figure had already grown to just under 15 percent.[157] In Léopoldville the population trebled between 1935 and 1945 to 96,000, and five years later the figure was 191,000.[158] Other provincial capitals also grew dramatically but had no more than 20,000 inhabitants each; the exception was Elisabethville in Katanga with 65,000.[159]

The war years also saw several strikes and instances of unrest. In Katanga UMHK workers demanded wage increases, food prices having risen exorbitantly due to the colony's economic isolation from continental Europe. A demonstra-

153 See Cooper, *Citizenship*.
154 This conclusion was reached at an early stage by Albertini, *Dekolonisation*, 585.
155 Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée*, 7; Seibert, *Globale Wirtschaft*, 199.
156 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 22.
157 Ibid., 41.
158 J. S. Lafontaine, *City Politics. A Study of Léopoldville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 28.
159 Young, *Politics*, 207.

tion in the provincial capital of Elisabethville was broken up with great brutality.[160] As in other colonies, mutinies broke out among returning soldiers who had fought in Madagascar, Egypt, Ethiopia or Burma.[161] The educated elite working in the administrative apparatus also began to make its voice heard.[162] Shortly after the quelling of a mutiny among soldiers in the garrison town of Luluabourg in February 1944, a group of educated Congolese submitted a petition to the local district commissioner entitled *Mémoire des évolués*. The authors saw themselves as champions of a new social class that had set itself apart from the "masses" over the previous 15 years as "a kind of indigenous bourgeoisie": "The members of this indigenous intellectual elite do what they can to advance their education and to live as decently as the respectable Europeans."[163] They demanded a number of privileges from the colonial administration: a special legal status, a regular audience with the provincial governor, better living conditions and transportation, greater recognition from the colonial officials who, they asserted, treated them like "savages," and measures to combat the abuse and insults they suffered at the hands of the European population.[164] For the colonial authorities, the actions of the *évolués* and the uprisings of soldiers in Luluabourg were all of a piece, possibly orchestrated by Belgium's wartime enemies. This suspicion was reinforced by the fact that the main author of the memorandum, Etienne Ngandu, was a doctor's assistant who had returned from the war, in which he had led the African medical corps as sergeant major.[165] The authors were banished to the backcountry.[166]

160 Ibid., 35. On the course of this demonstration and its influence on decolonization, see J. Seibert, "Winds of Change: Worker's Unrest and the Transformation of Colonial Capitalism in Katanga, Belgian Congo," in *Travail et culture dans un monde globalisé. De l'Afrique à l'Amerique latine*, eds. A. Eckert, B. Fall and I. Pfaff-Rheinberger (Paris: Karthala, 2013); Seibert, *Globale Wirtschaft*, 191–195.

161 On the uprisings in Masisi of March 1944, see Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 390. On those in Elisabethville see Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 36. In 1943 the *Force Publique* was made up of a total of 40,000 Congolese, but this figure included not just soldiers but also porters, and so on. After the war this figure decreased by half and reached the same level as before that conflict. See Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 19.

162 Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 389–390; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 39.

163 Memorandum from the *évolués* of Luluabourg to the district commissioner of Kasai, March 1944, quoted in Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 514.

164 Ibid.

165 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 44.

166 Ibid.

Despite the repression, colonial officials and the cabinet of the Belgian exile government in London took the memorandum very seriously.[167] For at about the same time groups of Congolese clerks in the provincial capitals of Elisabethville and Stanleyville had put forward similar demands.[168] In Elisabethville a number of educated city dwellers had met with the publisher of a local newspaper, a periodical whose socialist and anti-capitalist views were unique in the colony, seeking publication of their letters of protest.[169] This reinforced colonial officials' determination to push for closer integration of the *évolués*. Gustave Sand, who had received the memorandum as district commissioner in Luluabourg, addressed himself to the colonial minister in London: "We must attend to their moral education, their social and material life. They require a status of their own that sets them apart from the masses."[170]

A growing number of key actors called for the educated elite to be placed at the centre of colonial policy. While working closely with the General Government in Léopoldville, in a much-noticed article of 1943 liberal politician Robert Godding defended Belgium's "policy of the middle course, which takes account of the still primitive mentality of our black population as well as our concern to raise it gradually to a higher stage of civilization."[171] He was, however, vociferous in advocating the advancement of a Congolese elite by channelling the "best pupils" into further education and administrative tasks. Godding's intervention mirrored the elite-making policy initiated by the General Government in Léopoldville during the final two years of the war. Colonial officials there were already grappling with the possibility of a special legal status for the elite,[172] of the kind introduced

167 Minutes of cabinet meeting in London, 9 March 1944, 52, Archives de l'État.

168 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 57.

169 On the affiliations of Albert Decoster, his *Echo du Katanga*, founded in 1931, and the *évolués*' 1943 petition, submitted to that publication but censored by the authorities, see N. Esgain, "Scènes de la vie quotidienne à Elisabethville dans les années vingt," in *Itinéraires croisés de la modernité Congo belge (1920–1950)*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 69; J.-L. Vellut, "Albert Decoster," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 8, ed. Académie Royale Science d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1998), 80.

170 Report by Gustave Sand on the uprisings of 1944 in Luluabourg, quoted in Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 172.

171 R. Godding, "La politique indigène du Congo Belge," *Croix du Congo*, 16 January 1944. The quoted article is a translated version of an essay by Godding, which had originally appeared in the Belgian *Revue Message* under the title "The Congo in 1943 and After," a text distributed during the Belgian government's exile in London.

172 On the blueprint for a "special status" drawn up by the *Affaires Indigènes et de la Main-d'Oeuvre* (AIMO) in January 1945, see E. T. A., "Évolution ou révolution," in *Essor du Congo*, 8 February 1945, reprinted in A. Rubbens, ed., *Dettes de Guerre* (Elisabethville: Editions de l'Essor du Congo, 1945), 126–127.

by the French colonial government in neighbouring Brazzaville in 1942.[173] In a similar vein Governor General Pierre Ryckmans initiated the establishment, throughout the colony, of newspapers and associations that explicitly sought to attract the French-speaking section of the Congolese population. The General Government was thus entering the terrain traditionally occupied by the Catholic missionaries, who had begun to address themselves to the graduates of their secondary schools using the same kind of approach in the 1930s. In the late colonial Congo, the colonial state essentially saw its elite-making policy as a means of getting the elite under control. Creating a new elite milieu was intended to facilitate the shaping and surveillance of educated Congolese lifeworlds and realms of discourse. On the model of Belgium elite formation meant constructing a societal pillar adapted to the colonial situation, one that was supportive of the state, supra-ethnic, Catholic, bourgeoisified and exclusive.

This state activism is testimony to the rethinking of Belgian colonial policy. Certainly, the colonial state continued to see educated and elite Africans as potential supporters of communist and anticolonial ideas. Belgian colonial policy, however, was put on the spot by reforms in other empires. Furthermore, qualified workers were required to implement the planned programmes of modernization, and here the educated elite provided key intermediaries. Under the watchful eyes of the UN, moreover, elite formation was intended to rebut the international community's claim that Belgian colonial policy had failed to promote the cultural and political development of the people of the Congo. At the end of the Second World War, Belgian politicians dedicated to colonial policy had come to regard a state push to promote a Congolese elite as unavoidable. What they could not know was that the future of Belgian colonial rule depended on their responses to the demands set out in the *évolués*' memorandum.

Belgian elite-making policy after 1945 was no longer focused on segregating the population based on ethnic criteria. Instead, it was centred on yardsticks of social ordering that made a dichotomous distinction between country and city, tradition and modernity, and progress and "backwardness." A rural population contrasted with a growing group of urban Congolese, with a small number of the latter standing out for their assimilation and education.[174] In the inter-war period these assimilated Congolese were styled "detribalized," in other words in terms of what they "no longer" were.[175] The term *évolués* that now took hold, mean-

173 Cooper, *Citizenship*, 26.

174 This was a conception of society that had also underpinned France's new Africa policy as announced in 1944. Cooper, *Decolonization*, 181; Cooper, *Citizenship*, 27.

175 Ibid., 12.

while, underlined that this group was "not yet" fully developed. It was out of these so-called *évolués* that the colonial state set about forging an elite.

Who exactly was considered to be an *évolué?* This was an elite group within a Congolese workforce mainly employed in the agricultural and industrial sectors and often subject to forced recruitment.[176] According to 1947 estimates, of the 750,000 wage labourers just 40,000 were *évolués*, working as office workers in the colonial administration or in companies, as doctors' assistants, teachers and foremen, or who had gained the qualifications needed for such work.[177] Compared with the total population of more than ten million,[178] this figure seems negligible. Relative to the just under 35,000 Europeans resident in Congo at the same time,[179] however, what we find is a demographic dead heat that goes a long way to explaining not just the symbolic significance of the *évolués* in colonial discourse but also their importance – as a collaborative elite – to the maintenance of a colonial system that increasingly emphasized projects of modernization.

Moreover, the *évolués* constituted a steadily growing group of graduates of the missionary secondary schools. Following the period of expansion in the 1920s, across the colony there were just under a dozen schools of this type, most of them in the west, that is, in the capital of Léopoldville and the surrounding area.[180] Between 1939 and 1948, 15,000 Congolese men successfully completed their studies at these educational establishments.[181] The demand for office workers in particular had surged during the war years. Schools providing the relevant training had educated just 50 individuals in 1928, a figure that had increased to 330 by 1939 and 583 by 1943.[182] The term *évolués* denoted Congolese

176 De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 85.

177 These are the figures quoted by J. Van Wing (J. Van Wing, "La formation d'une élite noire au Congo Belge" *Bulletin C.E.P.S.I.* 5 [1948]), missionary and member of the Conseil Colonial. They are fairly close to the official surveys on Congolese staff carried out by the colonial administration in 1946, though the categories the latter used hamper any attempt to specify occupational groups. One category identifies 18,396 administrative workers, while another lumps together mission staff, teachers and domestic workers (146,290). There are no precise details on foremen or doctor's assistants. De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 85.

178 Of which 33 percent were women, 31 percent men and 43 percent children. See ibid., 52.

179 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 404.

180 Boma and Léopoldville both had schools for office workers. There was a training centre focused on agriculture in Stanleyville, while schools for doctor's assistants were to be found in Léopoldville, Stanleyville and Kisantu, which was 50 km away from Léopoldville. The seminaries were in eastern Baudoinville and central Kabwe, among other locations; Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 95.

181 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 52.

182 Tshimanga, *Jeunesse*, 89.

with a secondary education, that is, the group within the workforce with the highest income. At the top stood the office workers and bookkeepers who earned a monthly wage of 3,000 to 5,000 francs in the colonial administration and companies. Male nurses and factory foremen earned significantly less, the former 800 to 3,000 and the latter up to 1,725 francs.[183] As a group office workers stood out not just with respect to their earnings but increasingly in numerical terms as well. During the war this category had grown by 70 percent to just under 15,000;[184] by 1946 the figure had increased to 18,000.[185] The late colonial elite was made up chiefly of civil servants responsible for minor administrative tasks, a phenomenon that extended to the African possessions of other European imperial powers.[186] In contrast to colonies in West Africa, however, in the Belgian Congo no significant group of traders and entrepreneurs had developed that might have occupied an elite position on the back of economic success.[187] This was due chiefly to the fact that the concessionary economy established in the days of the Congo Free State and the associated mobilization of wage labourers had systematically destroyed traditional trading networks.[188] Even the retail trade was dominated by Greeks and Portuguese.[189]

Beyond a range of qualified, elite and educated occupational groups, the term *évolués* encompassed people of various regional, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Hailing from every part of the colony, the *évolués* embodied the fact that the Belgian Congo, as a centralized political construct, forced together highly heterogeneous population groups whose relationship to one another changed over the course of colonial rule. Certainly, the *évolués* were united by the French taught in secondary schools, but they came from the colony's more than 200 different linguistic communities, which took on new meanings as a result of colonial rule. Experiences of "being colonized"[190] took very different forms in differ-

183 These are the figures for 1947. "Rapport de la mission senatoriale," quoted in Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 92. There is no data on primary school teachers.

184 Ibid.

185 De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 85.

186 Tanganyika, for example. See Eckert, *Herrschen*.

187 On the example of the Gold Coast, see Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 136; on the Duala in Cameroon, see Eckert, *Grundbesitz*.

188 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 31; Seibert, *Globale Wirtschaft*, 223. The British Lever Brothers Limited had built up its palm oil production in the Belgian Congo since the 1910s because there, in contrast to the situation in Ghana and Nigeria, it faced no competition from local elites. Ibid., 143.

189 Young, *Politics*, 201. On the Portuguese community in the Belgian Congo, see J.-L. Vellut, *Congo. Ambitions et desenchantements 1880–1960* (Paris: Karthala, 2017), 139–162.

190 Vansina, *Being Colonized*.

ent regions. The extent to which, and at what point in time, the Congolese population entered into a "colonial relationship" based on inequality and domination depended first and foremost on their integration into "islands of colonial rule."[191] Major cities, in which the administrative system and industry established branches and in which trade and transport routes converged, along with missionary secondary schools, were distributed unevenly in geographic terms. Inevitably, then, certain population groups gained more access to the colonial working worlds than others. As a group the *évolués* often included representatives of the so-called Bakongo, Bangala and Baluba. The Bakongo lived in the western part of the colonial territory between the Congo River's Atlantic delta and the capital, Léopoldville. The term Baluba was used for a geographically scattered group who, in an attempt to evade Swahili slave traders, had fled from the eastern areas in the 1880s, settling mainly in the central region of Kasai, where they found themselves in the territory of the Belgian missionaries established around the same time.[192] The first European colonizers had included among the Bangala the heterogeneous communities living along the Congo River north-east of Léopoldville, particularly in Équateur quateur province. From the 1880s on the *Force Publique* had recruited its soldiers from among them, establishing Lingala as the language of the army and subsequently as a Congolese *lingua franca*.[193]

The emergence and establishment of these group designations was a colonial product. Ironically, it was the missionaries who had set out to bring Christian civilization to the world who studied local traditions and dedicated monographs to them, and whose knowledge shaped the genesis of modern anthropology.[194] Most of the Belgian missionaries were Flemings and, inspired ideologically by the Flemish movement that had grown in strength during the First World War, in the Congo too they understood language as a people's soul.[195] They gave the local dialects a written form, grouped them into supraordinate languages and used them in sermons and in primary education.[196] They also observed, mapped, described and defined the cultural, legal and social

191 Pesek, *Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 35.
192 Vansina, *Being Colonized*, 28.
193 Young, *Politics*, 240.
194 See P. Harries, "Anthropology," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. N. Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
195 N. R. Hunt, "Rewriting the Soul in a Flemish Congo," *Past & Present* 198, no. 1 (2008): 198.
196 B. Jewsiewicki, "The Formation of the Political Culture of Ethnicity in the Belgian Congo, 1920 – 1959," in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. L. Veil (Berkeley: Currey University of California Press, 1991), 329.

characteristics of the linguistic groups. Because the Belgian Congo was divided into the spheres of influence of the many missionary orders, those missionaries with an anthropological interest studied a variety of different groups. Jesuit Joseph Van Wing, whose order was responsible for the immediate surroundings of the capital Léopoldville, wrote multivolume works on the Bakongo who lived there, earning him membership of the Royal Anthropological Institute in London.[197] He defined the Bakongo as descendants of the Congo Kingdom, which extended back into the fourteenth century and had been part of the transatlantic cultural world due to the Portuguese slave trade. The Scheut order was dominant in the provinces of Kasai, Équateur and Léopoldville, where its missionaries became chroniclers of the Baluba and Mongo, whose precolonial kingdom had occupied territory in central Congo south of the river.[198] These ethnographically active missionaries taught the lessons, in French, in the small number of secondary schools. The ambivalent aspects of the notion of adaptation, straddling cultural civilizing and the preservation of tradition, shaped these missionaries' relationship to the Congolese elite. For example, in the seminary of Kisantu, Van Wing educated a generation of intellectuals who were subsequently employed in the administrative system and were proud both of their western education and of their status as Bakongo. In addition to the bourgeois and religious curriculum, the assimilated elite were also inculcated with a consciousness of those special aspects of their ethnic group the missionaries deemed worth preserving.

The educated Congolese addressed as a national elite by the colonial state after 1945 were confronted with a completely new concept of identity overarching the ethnic, linguistic, regional and missionary dividing lines within the colonial territory. In the model of the *évolués* the colonial state united the elites of a fragmented society like the parts of a broken vase; the glue was bourgeois morality, Catholic virtues and proximity to the colonial state.

For the first few years after the war the Colonial Ministry in Brussels supported the elite-building measures initiated by the General Government. During this period there was cross-party consensus on the need to satisfy the desires of the Congolese elite.[199] In the socialist-liberal-communist governing coalition immediately after the war, which lasted from 1945 to 1947, liberal minister Robert Godding, who had helped determine the reformist course adopted during the war in Léopoldville, continued this elite-making policy. But Godding broke

197 Denis, "Van Wing," 461.
198 Young, *Politics*, 246–249.
199 Ibid., 74.

with one of the basic tenets of Belgian colonial rule by providing Protestant mission schools with state funding for the first time. In four cities in the Congo, he also established secular grammar schools for European children and held out the prospect of similar establishments for their Congolese counterparts. Godding thus reinforced the Catholic missions' mistrust of the volatile governing constellations in Brussels, in which the PSC, as their patron and protector, was for the first time not involved. Certainly, even under the Liberals and following the expansion of the educational landscape – a process still informed by the precept of the gradual development of the overall population – the Catholic mission schools received the lion's share of state subsidies.[200] Yet particularly with respect to elite-making policy, henceforth the colonial state and the missions competed for the same target groups, placing a question mark over the Catholic missions' monopoly in this regard.

With the PSC's victory in 1947, the Colonial Ministry's education policy was once again dedicated exclusively to advancing the existing Catholic-dominated school infrastructure. The three state grammar schools were an exception.[201] As part of the Ten-Year Plan, expenditure on primary schools trebled in 1949 and the secondary schools expanded as well, but there was still no budget for higher education. The colonial state now increased its influence over teaching content: while missionaries were still allowed to teach in vernacular languages, the teaching of French began at a younger age.[202]

Under Colonial Minister Pierre Wigny of the Christian Social Party, the process of elite formation was highly paternalistic and assimilatory in character. Evidently, not only had specific elements of the metropolitan welfare state found their way to the Belgian Congo but so had the ideas of social order prevalent in post-war Belgium. While this neutral country had seen a comparatively small wartime decline in population, of 8,000 people, and its social structures had retained a certain stability during the occupation,[203] its political and intellectual elites lamented that it had lost its way morally during the war; this allegedly found expression in increasing violence and criminality and in a more self-centred and undisciplined society with a declining associational culture. Relationships between US-American soldiers and Belgian women outraged the leaders of the Catholic Church.[204] The inter-war debate on the equality of the sexes

200 P. M. Boyle, "School Wars. Church, State, and the Death of the Congo," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 3 (1995): 455.

201 Brassinne and Dumont, "Les autorités belges," 12.

202 Boyle, "School Wars," 456.

203 See Conway, *Sorrows*, 305.

204 Ibid., 311 and 314.

also flared up again. In the Walloon areas women had taken over the work of men held captive during the war and throughout the country they demanded the right to vote.[205] It was a European phenomenon that, in the eyes of the political elites, the Second World War had shattered an imagined social order. The Christian Democratic parties of Western Europe in particular came to power promising to restore this order. They not only touted social progress and reconciliation between the classes but also traditional familial models and conservative worldviews, and they combined the welfare state and the social market economy with an emphatically anti-communist stance.[206] While elsewhere Christian Democratic parties were founded only in the post-war period, in Belgium the *Parti Catholique*, which could look back on 50 years of experience in government, reformed itself. The PSC, established in 1945, no longer saw itself as confessional, but as Christian, and sought to shake off its image as an advocacy group for the Catholic Church. In the shape of Christian personalism it pursued a third way beyond liberal capitalism and Marxist totalitarianism.[207] The personalist social doctrine conceptualized individual freedom as the moral and material development of the person within societal frames of reference such as the nation, work, family and church.[208] Due to an increasingly youthful party membership, many members had been socialized within Catholic Action and the JOC during the militant inter-war period, and they had grown to maturity with the idea that it was possible to change the entire society through Catholic values.[209] The party's founding manifesto referred to "Christian civilization" and to the duty "to reconstruct a new society in the coming generations [the old society having been] fundamentally unsettled by the war."[210]

In the 1947 election the PSC assured itself of victory by advocating a reform programme that aimed to advance the welfare state and stimulate industrial development. It also benefited from the general population's greater orientation towards religious faith in the immediate post-war period, which had gone hand in hand with Catholic-dominated public debates on the cementing of the tradition-

205 Ibid., 296.

206 T. Judt, *A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2005), 80 – 81; M. Conway, "Introduction," in *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918 – 1965*, eds. T. Buchanan and M. Conway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 30.

207 Conway, "Belgium," 209.

208 F. Floré, "Promoting Catholic Family Values and Modern Domesticity in Postwar Belgium," in *Negotiating Domesticity. Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, eds. H. Heynen and G. Baydar (New York: Routledge, 2005), 85.

209 On the party's relaunch, see V. Dujardin and M. Dumoulin, *L'union fait-elle toujours la force?* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2008), 111; Conway, *Sorrows*, 211.

210 Quoted in Delwit and Hellings, "Du parti catholique," 17; Conway, *Sorrows*, 194.

al marriage – featuring a male breadwinner and a stay-at-home wife looking after household and children – and conventional gender relations more broadly.[211] The initial coalition with the Socialists was based on a common front against the PCB, whose brief surge in electoral support seemed threatening in light of the intensifying confrontation between the capitalist communist worlds. Helped by the reconstruction of party-oriented socioeconomic and cultural networks, the rival PSC and PSB managed to attract the support of between 75 percent and 80 percent of voters once again.[212] The "repillarization" of the fragmented society was complete.[213] When the PSC achieved an absolute majority in 1950, its welfare policies sought to consolidate the bourgeois nuclear family underpinned by Christian values.

In contrast to the situation in Great Britain, however, Belgium's colonial possessions appear to have played no role in the country's post-war debates on the gradual introduction of the welfare state.[214] Likewise, the question of a specific legal status for the Congolese elite was not subject to an overarching discussion of imperial citizenship that might have brought the metropolitan and colonial population into a common frame of reference, as in the case of the *Union Française*.[215] The Belgian state continued to keep the colonial and national political fields separate. The formation of a Congolese elite was the business of the Colonial Ministry. Nonetheless, we can discern common ground between these two spheres in socio-political terms. Against the background of the looming Cold War, liberal, Catholic and socialist parties were as one in their bourgeois desire to rein in Belgian society and integrate it politically through welfare policy and a national education policy– in significant part by re-pillarizing the various milieus.[216] In the Congo, by "improving [their] moral, social and material existence," the General Government aimed to achieve content colonial subjects who would be less susceptible to the feared communist infiltration.[217] The Ten-Year Plan, accordingly, promised to ensure the Congolese population's goodwill and allegiance.

211 Ibid., 195 and 304 – 305.
212 Ibid., 177.
213 Ibid., 206.
214 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 47.
215 On the French case, see Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 318.
216 See Conway, *Sorrows*, 9.
217 Letter from Vice-Governor General Léon Pétillon to the provincial governors, 30 May 1947, quoted in A.-S. Gijs, *Le pouvoir de l'absent: Les avatars de l'anticommunisme au Congo (1920 – 1961)* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2016), 161.

The first Christian Social colonial minister, Pierre Wigny, who had gained a PhD in law from Harvard and was co-author of the PSC's founding manifesto,[218] oriented his elite-making policy towards opinion leaders in the General Government who regarded the "total assimilation of the indigenous population as the inevitable result of our colonial policy."[219] In this context the *évolués* were considered the vanguard of, and developmental model for, a future Congolese society. In accordance with this personalistic conception of human beings, it was their national duty to "advance along the arduous path of civilization" within their familial, occupational and religious lifeworlds.[220] Overall, the developmental colonialism pursued in post-war Africa reflected the state's aspiration to organize, mould and control the colonial societies.[221] The objective of late colonial "social engineering" was to "re-educate [Africans] as urban residents"[222] and to hasten the emergence of a new "modern African."[223] The cementing of gender roles in the shape of a working husband and a home-making wife stood centre stage here.

After 1945 Belgium's colonial policy, which was heavily social interventionist in comparison to that of other empires when it came to social affairs, took on a new set of emphases.[224] Under the watchful eye of the international community, Belgium's official colonial paradigm posited Congolese society's capacity for cultural development and potential for social progress. However, as Frederick Cooper has underlined with respect to the 1940s and 1950s, in the eyes of the late colonial authorities it was in fact so-called "African culture" and "tradition" that stood in the way of progress. The concept of scarcely surmountable cultural differences supplanted the notion of unchangeable and quasi-biological differences supposedly inherent in "race." Theoretically, then, civilizational development

218 On Wigny's biography, see A. Stenmans and J. Charlier, "Pierre Wigny," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 9, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 2015).

219 P. Piron, "L'évolution des populations détribalisés," *Congrès Colonial National, Les évolués* (n.d.), 27. The jurist Piron was tasked with drawing up a legal reform tailored to the Congolese elite, initially by the General Government in Léopoldville and subsequently by Colonial Minister Wigny; See A. Rubbens, "Pierre Piron," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 7-B, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1977).

220 J.-M. Domont, *Élite noire* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1948), 131.

221 Cooper, *Decolonization*, 173.

222 Eckert, "Wohlfahrtsmix," 105.

223 Ibid.

224 Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, 63. For the Belgian Congo, see M. Bandeira Jerónimo, "Restoring Order, Inducing Change: Imagining a 'New (Woman)' in the Belgian Colonial Empire in the 1950s," *Comparativ* 28, no. 5 (2018).

was open to anyone who assimilated and dissociated themselves from African culture.[225] In Belgian developmental colonialism the civilizing mission's precept of assimilation underwent a major re-flowering. With its notion of the individual's capacity for development, in ideological terms the post-war civilizing mission resembled the pre-Darwinist model of the early nineteenth century.[226] At the same time, the notion of the successive civilizational development of Congolese society tallied with the faith in progress so characteristic of modernization theory. In the debate on elite-making policy, missionaries, politicians concerned with colonial policy and educated Congolese used terms such as progress, development and civilizing synonymously. The vernacular elite was to provide the model pupils for a Belgian civilizing mission that took on the air of a project of moralization.

However, in the Belgian Congo the first group that had to satisfy the state's aspirations for a moral and bourgeoisified class was not the new Congolese elite. Instead, within colonial discourse this group was viewed as an extension of a "colonial elite" that, until 1945, included only Europeans resident in the colony, be they settlers, merchants or administrative workers.[227] The evidence, particularly from the 1910s onwards, shows that the Belgian colonial state increasingly evaluated Europeans' conduct through criteria of morality and bourgeois culture. The Colonial Ministry, for example, paid greater attention to the professional and moral education of future colonial officials in special training centres. Certainly, it was already one of the basic principles of colonial ideology that the prestige and respectability of colonialism depended in part on the resident European actors' conduct and lifestyle. But the Belgian state had taken over the Congo in 1908 as Leopold II's infamous colony and, in view of the history of atrocities, other European colonial powers were vocal in questioning its capacity for colonization. Belgium was thus especially keen for the Europeans to demonstrate exemplary conduct. The "refinement of the leading European cadres"[228] and the recruitment of a "moral elite"[229] were attempts to demonstrate the respectability of

225 Cooper, *Decolonization*, 17.

226 On the various rationales put forward for the civilizing missions, see Barth and Osterhammel, *Zivilisierungsmissionen*.

227 On the following remarks, see A. Lauro and V. Piette, "Le Congo Belge. Coloniser sans élites?," in *Au sommet de l'Empire. Les élites européennes dans les colonies (XVIe-XXe siècle)*, eds. C. Laux et al. (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009).

228 This was the term for these actors in administrative correspondence around 1915. Quoted in ibid., 127.

229 Ibid., 129.

Belgium's colonial project to those colonial powers that were sceptical about it.[230]

Hence, when the colonial state addressed itself to the Congolese elite as a moral grouping, this was in continuity with its programmes to foster an exemplary Belgian colonial elite. Yet for the African elite the Europeans were a highly ambivalent role model. That Europeans were to play this role for the upper echelons of African society was an expression of the ideology of colonial civilizing missions. Ever since France had declared the civilizing of colonized peoples the duty of the European states around 1870, the civilizing mission had served as a legitimizing strategy for European colonialism. The supposedly primitive colonial subjects were to be raised up, on the model of a superior European culture, so that they could one day govern themselves.[231] It was Africans' responsibility to learn the lessons of civilized life through assimilation, in other words by imitating Europeans. Colonial ideologues conceived of this assimilation as a one-sided learning process. Conversely, imitation was a thorn in their flesh whenever young male Europeans in remote colonial outposts, without a family or reference group, associated with Africans and adopted local habits and customs.[232] *Verkaffern* was the disparaging term used by the German press around 1900 to convey these processes of cultural adaptation to the African population among Europeans.[233] The trope of assimilation dominant within colonial discourse was a normative one and referred exclusively to Africans' continual learning from the example of a respectable European. By creating a colonial elite of Congolese, the Belgian colonial state expected nothing less than a new group of intermediaries that would aid its civilizing mission. The image of Congolese society underpinning this policy assumed that it was divided into a small assimilated elite and an uneducated mass.[234] Henceforth, the Congolese moral elite was to play the role that had previously been the preserve of the Europeans in the colony, namely that of civilizational role model. To the extent that the indigenous politics of

230 A. Lauro, "Les politiques du mariage et de la sexualité au Congo Belge (1908 – 1945): Genre, race, sexualité et pouvoir colonial" (PhD diss., Université libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, 2010), 551.

231 On the French civilizing mission, see Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 1 – 10. A good overview is provided by A. Eckert, "Die Verheißung der Bürokratie. Verwaltung als Zivilisierungsagentur im kolonialen Westafrika," in *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, eds. B. Barth and J. Osterhammel (Konstanz: UVK, 2005).

232 Saada, "Entre 'assimilation' et 'décivilisation,'" 28 – 30.

233 Conrad, *Kolonialgeschichte*, 75.

234 Here we can discern parallels with the welfare programmes in British colonies. In light of the case of Tanganyika Andreas Eckert shows that the colonial social policy pursued by the British after 1945 sought, with moderate success, not just to integrate the war veterans but also to close the gap between proletariat and elite. See Eckert, "Wohlfahrtsmix," 111.

the post-war era presented the mass's imitative approximation of the vernacular elite as an ideal, the task of cultural assimilation through social interaction passed to this top level of African society. In short, the African elite was to be bourgeoisified so that it in turn could carry out the task of bourgeoisification. It was to be moralized in order to moralize.

However, the elite's delegated function as role model stood in contrast to what sociologist Emmanuelle Saada calls "maintaining a safe distance."[235] In practice everyday interaction between Africans and Europeans, as presupposed by assimilation theory, was very limited and mostly took place in mission schools or workplaces. Yet the missionaries in their vestments, who preached the ideal of civilized European masculinity to educated Africans, were a rather poor role; many young urban men regarded them as "bearded women."[236] In addition, the institutionalized separation of lifeworlds was an impediment to social interactions, as in the case, for example, of a form of urban planning that segregated the residential quarters and recreational sites of Europeans and Africans. At the same time, the Belgian colonial state fostered the "bourgeoisification of the colonized communities."[237] Hence, restrictive immigration laws prohibited the settlement of destitute or lower-class Belgians and provided for the expulsion of Europeans who cultivated a lifestyle displeasing to the colonial administration – because it contradicted the ideal of a moral elite as the highest stage of civilization. Time and again the colonial authorities were scandalized by the "lack of decency"[238] shown by their officials, most of whom had arrived in the colony as single men and were conspicuous for their excessive consumption of alcohol,[239] entering into sexual relationships with Congolese women and their excessive violence.[240] In the eyes of the authorities this conduct disrupted the colonial order.[241] Tellingly, the resistance of Congolese to behavioural change was said to be the result of Europeans' poor conduct.[242] In much the same way as other European colonial powers, after the First World War Belgian grad-

235 Saada, "Entre 'assimilation' et 'décivilisation,'" 30.

236 Gondola, *Tropical*, 10.

237 Lauro and Piette, "Le Congo Belge," 125.

238 Lauro, "Politiques," 552.

239 On the alcohol consumption of Belgian colonial officials, see A. Vleugels, *Narratives of Drunkenness, Belgium 1830–1914* (London: Routledge, 2015), 99–102.

240 For a general account of Europeans in the colonies, see Conrad, *Kolonialgeschichte*, 75–79. On the excessive violence and abuse of power among German colonial officials in Togo, see R. Habermas, *Skandal in Togo. Ein Kapitel deutscher Kolonialherrschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2016).

241 Lauro, "Politiques," 52 and 552.

242 Ibid., 551.

ually began to support the settlement of women from the metropole, which promised to facilitate the import of a respectable "bourgeois European family" to the Congo and was also intended to impede relationships between European men and Congolese women.[243] While 9,000 of the 25,000 Europeans in the Congo were women and children in 1930, the latter group made up 24,000 out of 43,408 individuals by 1948.[244] The emergence of residential districts for European families and other socially exclusive forms of community formation for the European colonial population exacerbated the segregation within the rapidly growing cities.[245]

Hence, the promotion of the Congolese elite as practised within Belgian colonial policy after 1945 involves a paradox. On the one hand, the colonial habitus[246] of the European population and the bourgeois culture that it entailed embodied the ultimate objective of the civilizing mission.[247] On the other hand, the colonial habitus was a means of cultural distinction inherent in European rule, whose legitimization required the everyday staging of civilizational superiority *vis-à-vis* Africans. The European colonial elite, then, was both a shining example and the custodian of hierarchical difference. The *évolués*, who were addressed by the colonial state as an elite, were supposed to emulate an ideal of European bourgeois culture. Yet in order to maintain the colonial order it was vital that they never fully measure up to it.[248]

243 Lauro and Piette, "Le Congo Belge," 134–135. On the example of German South West Africa, see K. Walgenbach, *"Die weiße Frau als Trägerin deutscher Kultur." Koloniale Diskurse über Geschlecht, "Rasse" und Klasse im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus 2005), 83–88.

244 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 403–404.

245 Gondola, *Tropical*, 38; A. Lauro, *Coloniaux, ménagères et prostituées au Congo belge (1885–1930)* (Brussels: Labor, 2005), 45.

246 On the "metropolitan habitus," see M. Pesek, "Die Kunst des Reisens. Die Begegnung von europäischen Forschungsreisenden und Ostafrikanern in den Kontaktzonen des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Erinnerungsräume und Wissenstransfer. Beiträge zur afrikanischen Geschichte*, eds. W. Speitkamp, J. Reulecke and B. Neumann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); M. Pesek, "Performing the Metropolitan Habitus. Images of European Modernity in Cross-Cultural Encounters in Nineteenth Century Eastern Africa," in *Figurations of Modernity. Global and Local Representations in Comparative Perspective*, eds. V. Houben and M. Schrempf (Frankfurt am Main: 2008).

247 Pesek, *Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 32–33; A. L. Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories. European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (1989): 137.

248 Eckert, "Verheißung der Bürokratie," 271.

Elite periodicals between propaganda and empowerment

Congolese voices

The *Voix du Congolais*, the most important newspaper for the Belgian Congo's new elite, was a child of the Second World War. It must be viewed in the context of the propaganda activities pursued by the General Government, based in the capital city of Léopoldville, whose *Service de l'Information et de la Radiodiffusion* had kept European residents throughout the colony informed about the course of the war since September 1940 and, backing Belgium's exile government, had condemned the German occupation of the country.[1] In response to the public demands made by educated Congolese, in 1944, under Governor General Pierre Ryckmans, an equivalent department came into being in the shape of the *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes*, which was incorporated into the *Affaires Indigènes et de la Main-d'Oeuvre* (AIMO).[2] This new section was headed by Jean-Paul Quix, who had worked in the Congo for 20 years as a territorial official. A former student of philosophy, he was put in charge of a newspaper for the vernacular elite under the aegis of the General Government in Léopoldville.[3]

In October and November 1944 Quix assembled a group made up of Congolese office workers employed in the colonial administrative apparatus and mission school teachers, who declared their objectives to be the "civic education of all Congolese" and the turning of "blacks" into "model citizens."[4] The *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes* was subdivided into the fields of press, radio, cinema and libraries; committees with a president and six members were established

1 The following remarks are based on articles in the 10-year anniversary edition of the *Voix du Congolais*, in which a number of key actors discuss its establishment; *Voix du Congolais* no. 106 (January 1955). For a concise overview of the newspaper, see Kadima-Nzuji, *Littérature*, 40 – 43; J. C. Ekabmo, "La Voix du Congolais s'est éteinte," *Le Phare*, 21 October 2010, www.lephareonline.net/la-voix-sest-eteinte/ (1 May 2015).

2 This department was the Congolese counterpart to the *Service de l'Information et de la Radiodiffusion*. Headed by Carl Goebel, in 1942 it was renamed the *Service de l'Information et de la Propaganda*. See A. Cornet and F. Gillet, *Congo-Belgique, 1955 – 1965. Entre propagande et réalité* (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 2010), 8; self-description of the *Service de l'Information et de la Propaganda* du Congo Belge, 31 December 1943, AA/GG/5403.

3 On Quix's career, see J. Burlion, "J. P. Quix," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 7-B, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1977).

4 "Activités des Comités d'Information de Léopoldville," *Voix du Congolais* no. 1, (January-February 1945): 17 – 21, 17.

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for each of these. At the first meeting, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, an African employee of the General Government with journalistic experience, had already underlined his leading role by giving a speech of welcome, and he was made head of the press committee. Given the wartime lack of resources this committee initially rejected a proposal to found a daily and weekly newspaper. Instead, it resolved to develop a "monthly newspaper for French-speaking blacks and a magazine for uneducated Congolese."[5] The *Voix du Congolais*, aimed at a Francophone readership, appeared in January 1945, initially in a 32-page edition, while the magazine, for those unable to read, was first published in 1947 under the name *Nos Images*.

The *Voix du Congolais* featured opinion pieces, short articles, reportage, information on cultural and social affairs, news of associations, reports from the colony and occasionally from across the world, but also poems, photo series, readers' letters and illustrations. Flicking through this newspaper gives one a sense of what the *évolués*' concerns were, how they commented upon events and developments in their country, how they interpreted their place within colonial society, what their demands were and how they saw their future.

In Léopoldville, the editorial team moved into an office on the Avenue Baudouin, the capital's main connecting road, between the new Congolese residential district and the European town centre. A sign reading *La Voix du Congolais*, mounted on the building's projecting roof, was an advertisement for the newspaper but also an attempt to bolster the image of the colonial government, which now pledged to listen to the Congolese.

The motto of the *Voix du Congolais*, "By Congolese, For Congolese," suggested a genuinely Congolese medium. The first issue included the minutes of the founding meetings, illustrated by a group photograph of the committee members, which may in part have been an attempt to convince readers of the credibility of the newspaper's motto. Readers were also informed that the motto was supposed to apply to literally every educated Congolese. Among the newspaper's founding actors, the General Government's close cooperation with Catholic missions on schooling had earlier thrown up the question of whether the authorities would tolerate graduates of Protestant mission schools on the editorial team. The assurance given by the *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes* that it would refrain from any form of "religious politics" was lent weight by the subsequent nomination of Protestant vice-presidents to every committee.[6] The *Voix du Congolais* was thus conceptualized as the medium of a cross-confessional educated

5 Ibid., 18.
6 Ibid., 17.

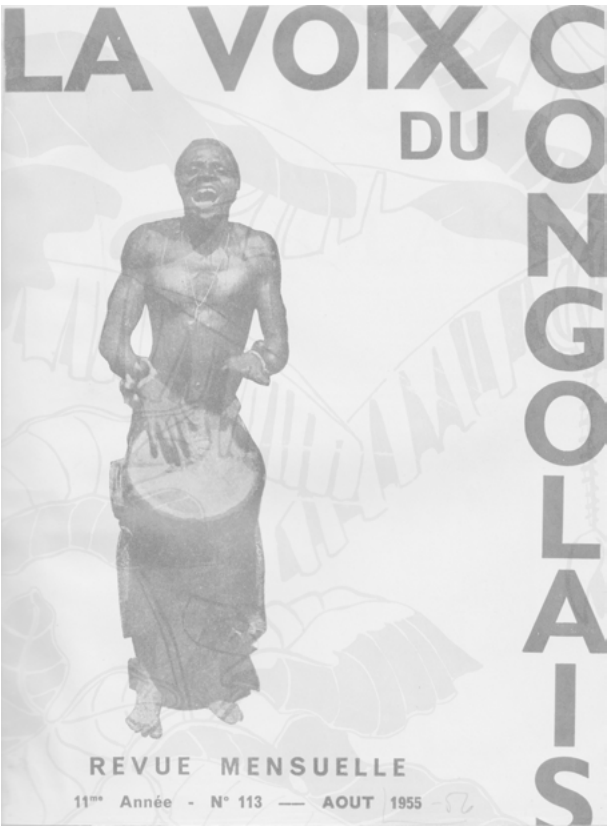

Fig. 4: The cover of the *Voix du Congolais*.

elite that was to take shape through a process of media-based socialization. The newspaper addressed itself to graduates of secondary mission schools, from which women were excluded by the colonial education system, so it was the voice of Congolese men only. The colonial state provided the *évolués* with an exclusively male public sphere through media and associations, while the bourgeois gendered order it propagated kept women tied to household and family.[7]

7 On the gender-based realms of the bourgeois public sphere, see Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, 35; U. Frevert, "Bürgerliche Meisterdenker und das Geschlechterverhältnis: Konzepte, Erfahrungen, Visionen an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert," in *Bürgerinnen und Bürger. Geschlechterverhältnisse im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. U. Frevert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988). For an account that sounds out the transitions between private and public spaces, see Budde, "Geschlechtergeschichte."

Fig. 5: The Avenue Baudouin amid afternoon traffic flows, 1947. On the left the building of the foyer social, on the right the editorial offices of the *Voix du Congolais*.

But it was not just readers that the General Government had to persuade but also future staff members. The minutes of the committee meetings say nothing about the initial lack of trust felt by the Congolese members of the editorial team regarding the colonial state's patronage of the *Voix du Congolais*. Joseph Davier, founding member and graduate of a Catholic mission school that trained for positions in the colonial administration, later recalled that those invited to participate initially suspected that the General Government's initiative was an attempt to identify critical individuals with the help of the newspaper.[8] According to him all those present were aware that criticism of the Belgian authorities could result in severe punishment. Banishment to remote regions of the hinterland and a flogging with a hippopotamus-hide whip were among the most feared.[9] Clearly, against this background it took courage for Congolese to get involved in this media pilot project. Yet for these authors it held out the prospect of participating, as responsible citizens, in debates on post-war Congo and of making their voices heard.

8 J. Davier, "Souvenirs d'anniversaire," *Voix du Congolais* no. 106 (January 1955): 8.
9 Ibid.

The columns of the *Voix du Congolais* were penned not just by the editorial staff in Léopoldville but by Congolese writers from throughout the colonial territory. Some authors, however, complained about the lack of local news. In view of the large number of reports concerning Léopoldville, this fuelled the impression that the newspaper was only by and for *évolués* in the capital. The colonial government responded to this critique and added publications with a regional focus to the state-sponsored press landscape. Newspapers such as the Coquilhatville-based *Mbandaka* were popular among the local *évolués*.[10] The relative independence of the economically important region of Katanga, meanwhile, was apparent in the foundation of the monthly newspaper *L'Etoile-Nyota*. This was published by the AIMO of the provincial government in Elisabethville under the leadership of a former editor of the conservative *Essor du Congo*, a publication aimed at a European readership. The *Etoile-Nyota* resembled the *Voix du Congolais* in its didactic style. It printed articles about the *évolués*' associations in Katanga but also sought to appeal to the less educated workers employed in local industries. Nonetheless, the *Voix du Congolais* remained the leading voice for the educated elite throughout the Belgian Congo.

The aspiration of the *Voix du Congolais* to be a newspaper for all Congolese was a logistical challenge given the colonial territory's geography and infrastructure. From Léopoldville the postal service distributed the newspaper far into the hinterland, by aeroplane, boat, train and automobile. The authorities made a conscious effort to provide associations of *évolués* and individual *évolué* subscribers with the latest edition. Particularly in remote areas, however, deliveries were often unreliable, prompting some readers who had already paid an annual fee in advance to cancel their subscription in frustration.[11] In a territory half the size of Western Europe whose infrastructure was only now being developed, the second issue of the *Voix du Congolais* could present it as a success that 700 Congolese and a number of Europeans had taken out subscriptions, while several hundred individual copies of each edition had been sold. By the end of 1947 the number of subscribers had risen to 2,200.[12] Over the course of the 1950s the monthly print run levelled off at 4,700 copies, so that the *Voix du Congolais*

10 On *Mbandaka*'s network of correspondents and on its sales and distribution, see AA/GG/7755.

11 Letter to the territorial administrator of Inongo, 1 October 1956, AA/GG/15611.

12 Chambre des représentants, *Rapport sur l'administration de la colonie du Congo Belge pendant l'année 1947 présenté aux Chambres Législatives* (Brussels: Ministere des affaires africaines, 1948), 15. There are no documents that might allow us to deduce annual trends in numbers of subscribers.

remained an elite product; five times as many copies of *Nos Images*, which was aimed at an uneducated readership, were published.[13]

The General Government got its administrative officials involved in the newspaper's sales and distribution and frequently required them to promote it. The various provincial governors, meanwhile, kept records of the subscriptions obtained within a given year and passed them on to Léopoldville. The General Government issued special guidelines for the newspaper's distribution. In each urban administrative unit, for example, at least one issue of the *Voix du Congolais* had to be made available for every 300 families. Relative to the monthly wage of the target group, that is, the educated and employed Congolese elite, the General Government considered the purchase price socially acceptable. The colonial state assumed that the newspaper would have to be subsidized; the revenue raised was merely supposed to cover production costs.[14] The distribution targets, however, were barely achieved. The provincial governors, who had to account for the subscription figures to the colonial government, often criticized the inadequate promotional work done by their subordinate officials. While some territorial officials failed to attract any new subscribers, others managed to do so by obliging Congolese office workers to tout the newspaper within their circle of acquaintances.[15] In addition, in order to increase readers' engagement, the newspaper introduced an annual contest to achieve the largest number of new subscribers. A portrait photograph of the winner was printed in the newspaper. The best results were attained by Congolese clerks, who were awarded a bicycle, typewriter or subscription.[16]

A progress report by Alphonse Salongo from Stanleyville sheds some light on the difficulties involved in acquiring subscribers. Initially, given the existence of "thousands of young intellectuals," which meant school leavers with the ability to read, he had drawn up a list of 150 individuals who might be interested, whom he then visited at home or at their place of work.[17] If some of the potential subscribers were unable to pay sixty francs for an annual subscription, Salongo

13 Centre de Recherche et d'Information Socio-Politiques, "La presse quotidienne au Congo," *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP* 26 (1959).

14 Letter from the governor of Équateur province to the territorial administrators, 3 May 1956, AA/GG/20535.

15 Letter from the territorial administrator in Gemena to Congolese office workers, 22 May 1956, AA/GG/8079.

16 "Résultats du grand concours de propagande 1951," *Voix du Congolais* no. 62 (May 1951): 286; "Résultats du grand concours de propagande 1949," *Voix du Congolais* no. 37 (April 1949): 133.

17 A. Songolo, "Réflexions d'un propagandiste de La Voix du Congolais," *Voix du Congolais* no. 65 (August 1951): 443.

sought them out on payday. He presented himself as a relentless and incessant promoter who combed through bars and residential buildings in his spare time looking for customers. The way in which Salongo interpreted the lack of interest of his target group reflects the self-image of the *Voix du Congolais* as a vehicle for the forging of a Congolese elite. As he saw it only the newspaper's readers were members of this elite. For Salongo lack of interest or unwillingness to pay the subscription fee were evidence of an immoral lifestyle in which alcohol was more important than education and family. Salongo was recognized as the second-best advertiser of 1950, his prize "an excellent bicycle." Later, however, he related, his customers demanded a reward for their help in the shape of two crates of beer or shared use of the bicycle. The chief editor of the newspaper praised Salongo's efforts and complained about the ignorant *évolués*, who showed little inclination to help shape the future of the Congo.[18]

Distrust of a newspaper spawned by the colonial government, irregular deliveries and other consumption priorities: there were a number of reasons for the problems suffered by the *Voix du Congolais* as it sought to win over its target group. Another was undoubtedly the accessibility of its texts in terms of both content and language. The newspaper presented itself as an emphatically elite organ. Its articles, all of which were in French, presupposed an advanced level of schooling.[19] Seminary graduates writing for the paper came across as particularly bookish with their Latin phrases and philosophical treatises. The layout was highly formal, the flow of text leavened by just a few pictures. The authors' obvious attempts to demonstrate their eloquence and education through highbrow and unusual language made the newspaper a demanding read, one aimed explicitly at the "elite of the indigenous society."[20]

The state of the sources does not allow us to make empirically reliable statements about how widely distributed and well known the *Voix du Congolais* actually was among its target group. But we can gain some insight – in the form of a random sample – from a survey carried out by a Catholic missionary of the Scheut order in the newspaper's first year of publication in Kabinda, an

18 Ibid., 446–447.

19 A short report in Lingala, a *lingua franca* in the Belgian Congo disseminated by the *Force Publique*, which advanced to the status of official national language following independence, was first published in 1957; J. Koy, "Sango na Yahuma," *Voix du Congolais* no. 139 (October 1957): 800–801. This prompted a number of readers to send in letters demanding a return to a French-only publication. For them, a newspaper for the elite ought to be in French; N. Mpako, "Une opinion," *Voix du Congolais* no. 142 (January 1958): 79.

20 "Sommaire," *Voix du Congolais* no. 40 (July 1949): 258.

urban settlement in Kasai Province.[21] Of the 47 "office workers and other *évolués*" who were questioned, just 11 had heard about the publication of the first two issues, and of the total of 8 readers only half indicated that they had understood the content.[22] In order not to permanently put off potential readers through the newspaper's high linguistic level, in 1947 the *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes* began to send articles written in a generally understandable way from the *Voix du Congolais* and other media specifically to territorial administrators and the patrons of elite institutions. These so-called "articles for Congolese" were intended to serve association members as a basis for their own talks or for group discussions and they were allowed to reproduce them free of charge.[23] Topics such as "Sunday joys" and "fashion, personal grooming and good taste" imparted notions of morality and tips on everyday behaviour.[24] Hence, while the level of sophistication was sometimes dialled down for the associations, the *Voix du Congolais* remained a medium for educated Congolese with a desire for knowledge, who could reassure themselves of their elite education by reading the publication and helping to edit it.

The founding and reception of the *Voix du Congolais* must be interpreted in the context of the colonial reforms implemented towards the end of the Second World War. The newspaper was a component in the colonial state's elite-making project.[25] It constituted a public sphere through which the country's colonial elite, the *évolués*, could be addressed and talk to one another and it provided them with unprecedented opportunities for journalistic activity. It also represented a medium that allowed the colonial government to communicate its interests and to win over the Congolese elite to Belgian post-war developmental colonialism.[26] The *Voix du Congolais* made announcements about the progress of the Ten-Year Plan and reported on improvements in everyday lives. For example, articles provided information on the expansion of medical facilities, while photo series showed major construction sites, apparently soon to be transformed

21 Letter to Georges Six, provincial bishop of Léopoldville, 3 March 1945, KADOC/O/II/b/9/5.
22 Ibid.
23 Letter from the provincial governor in Coquilhatville to the district commissioner of Tshuapa, 26 February 1946, AA/GG/5991. Later entire series of such articles were sent out in single batches, AA/GG/10384.
24 Ibid.
25 On government-owned periodicals and settler newspapers in relation to African intermediaries and colonial public spheres in West and East Africa, see E. Hunter, "'Our common humanity': print, power, and the colonial press in interwar Tanganyika and French Cameroun," *Journal of Global History* 7 (2012).
26 On the history of colonial propaganda in the Belgian Congo, see Cornet and Gillet, *Congo-Belgique*. On colonial propaganda in Belgium, see Stanard, *Selling*.

into hospitals, schools, factories and new residential areas. These semantic and visual depictions of the Belgian Congo set out to persuade rather than to inform. First and foremost, they imparted the success story of the allegedly model colony. The propagandistic messages were intended to "trigger a specific perception of events or opinions" on the part of the target group,[27] a perception geared towards the core elements of colonial ideology and politics.

But the newspaper propagated the reformist intent of Belgian colonialism not just to the *évolués* but also to the critical international community. This was a publication that reflected the colonial rulers' desire for prestige; they were less concerned about its linguistic accessibility than with the image it conveyed of their overseas possession.

In a sense, the elite language used in the *Voix du Congolais* made it the poster child for Belgian colonial policy: the newspaper was intended to demonstrate to the outside world the successes of the Belgian Congo's schools, which had been criticized as inadequate. Praise was soon to be heard in the United States, from the chief editor of *The Crisis*, a periodical founded by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1910, published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and dedicated to the integration of African Americans through education. In the *Voix du Congolais*, *The Crisis* glimpsed the "product of intelligence and an indigenous pen,"[28] testimony to the Belgians' civilizational influence in the Congo. But critical voices were also to be heard. The US-American consul general in Léopoldville was not convinced by the newspaper. Given that the colonial government had shown such a lack of interest in the affairs of educated Congolese for so many years, he interpreted the publication of an elite periodical – against the background of the pending UN founding conference – as a transparent "attempt, at the last minute, to demonstrate a more liberal stance towards the indigenous population.[29]

A voice for the Congolese elite, published by the colony's General Government: it is hardly surprising that actors critical of colonialism viewed the *Voix*

27 T. Bussemer, "Propaganda. Theoretisches Konzept und geschichtliche Bedeutung," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, accessed February 4, 2021, doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.239.v1. On the definition of the problematic concept of propaganda and suggestions, taken up in the present book, on how we might operationalize it in studies of a cultural-historical nature, see Bussemer, "Propaganda"; R. Gries, "Zur Ästhetik und Architektur von Propagemen. Überlegungen zu einer Propagandageschichte als Kulturgeschichte," in *Kultur der Propaganda*, eds. R. Gries and W. Schmale (Bochum: Winkler, 2005).

28 A.-R. Bolamba, "Une année historique," *Voix du Congolais* no. 7 (January-February 1946): 243.

29 Quoted in Mollin, *USA und der Kolonialismus*, 141.

du Congolais with scepticism. In particular, pan-Africanist and Marxist intellectuals, who came together in Paris after 1945 much as they had done in the inter-war period,[30] doubted the sincerity of the newspaper's goals. The newspaper *Présence Africaine* had been founded in the French capital in 1947 by Alouine Diop, a Senegalese member of the French Senate and university professor. Its first issue cited the *Voix du Congolais* as an example of a new wave of trivial and paternalistic publications in the colonial world.[31] For the *Présence Africaine* the *Voix du Congolais* was the polar opposite of its free-thinking approach and critique of colonialism. The newspaper from Léopoldville did in fact seem provincial and anachronistic when compared with *Présence Africaine*,[32] which carried articles by renowned intellectuals from all over the world such as Jean Paul Sartre, Georges Balandier, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Richard Wright. In his review of the *Voix du Congolais*, philosophy teacher Jacques Howlett cast doubt on the authors' freedom of expression.[33] He quoted the text accompanying a photograph in the Congolese publication: "A fine group of *évolués* in Léopoldville." To him this was evidence enough that in this newspaper the *évolués* were objects rather than subjects. He concluded his scathing review with a sarcastic suggestion for an alternative caption: "A wall, a fig tree, a plant, an *évolué*."[34]

30 On this milieu after 1945, see A. Eckert, "Das Paris der Afrikaner und die Erfindung der Négritude," *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2007), http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2007/Article=111 (24 January 2021); J. Riesz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor und der afrikanische Aufbruch ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 2006); L. Heerten, "Léopold Sédar Senghor als Subjekt der 'Dialektik des Kolonialismus.' Ein Denker Afrikas und die imperiale Metropole," *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 15 (2008). On its forerunners in the inter-war period, see M. Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*.

31 J. Howlett, "La Revue des Revues," *Présence Africaine* no. 1 (1947): 179.

32 The periodicals in the Belgian Congo differ markedly from some of the critical or openly anti-colonial African-owned newspapers in parts of West and East Africa. On the history of newspapers in the Gold Coast since the mid-nineteenth century, see, A. Gadzekpo, "Gender Discourse and Representational Practices in Gold Coast Newspapers," *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 1, no. 2 (2001); Newell, "How to Play"; Plageman, *Accra*. On the radical press in Nigeria with an international audience, see O. Coates, "'His telegrams appear to be hysterical, but he is very astute: Azikiwe's spectacular self and the 1945 General Strike in Nigeria,'" *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 30, no. 3 (2018). On East Africa, see J.F. Scotton, "The first African press in East Africa: Protest and Nationalism in Uganda in the 1920s," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6 (1973).

33 Ibid.; on the role of Jacques Howlett in *Présence Africaine*, see V. Y. Mudimbe, eds., *The Surreptitious Speech. Présence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 369 – 371.

34 Howlett, "La Revue des Revues," 179.

These contemporary perspectives from outside certainly capture the field of tension within which the *Voix du Congolais* operated – between the propaganda of the colonial state and the participation of Congolese in society. But in reality, how strong a position did colonial policy grant to the vernacular elite within the media and public sphere?

The critique articulated at the international level saw the *Voix du Congolais* as a strategic move by the architects of Belgian colonial policy, one intended to enhance its standing within the international system. In particular, doubters questioned whether Congolese authors could use the newspaper to make their voices heard or express criticism. Yet these appraisals failed to grasp the heterogeneity and complexity of the colonial situation in the Belgian Congo. First, a greater number of actors were involved than implied by the dichotomous notion of colonizers and colonized. Furthermore, within the institutions of the colonial state having a say and propaganda were not necessarily mutually exclusive concepts. Instead, they entered into ambivalent fusions. In a seeming paradox, the Congolese authors' agency began the moment they accepted the colonial government's promises of change and demanded that it make good on them. Belgian reformist propaganda could placate the UN with its critique of colonialism, but this stirred up the feelings and expectations of the elite. It is crucial, then, to go beyond an examination of the colonial propaganda produced by the *Voix du Congolais* solely from the perspective of the indoctrination and manipulation of this elite. We also have to scrutinize the new scope for articulation and room for manoeuvre that the newspaper opened up to them. Educated Congolese were not passive readers but active authors.[35] Unable to foresee the consequences of doing so, through the new elite's key medium the colonial state laid the ground for a contentious debate on the future of the Belgian Congo.

The print media of the Catholic missionary orders

The early press landscape of colonial Africa was the work of missions. Not just in the Belgian Congo but in other colonies as well it was missionaries that taught Africans to read and write and acquainted them with a textual culture. For these missionaries, reading the Bible was tantamount to a direct dialogue with God and they often involved converts who had learned to write in the production

35 Here I adhere to a conception of propaganda in which "propaganda–based communication [is] understood to entail active complicity between propagandists and recipients, in the process of which meanings are negotiated and recalibrated." T. Bussemer, "Propaganda," 11; see also Gries, "Zur Ästhetik," 19 – 21.

of short texts, newspapers and even novels.[36] As a key instrument of the colonial state's elite-making, the *Voix du Congolais* entered a media realm that the Catholic missions had already created in rudimentary form in the 1920s. Through occasional newspapers the Catholic missionary orders had addressed themselves to the graduates of their secondary schools. In Belgium too, during the inter-war period an ideologically differentiated confessional press landscape had become established within the framework of Catholic Action. In addition to intellectual and literary reviews this encompassed many newspapers launched by Catholic reading groups, youth associations, women's associations, schools and universities.[37] While the mission-based press landscape in the Belgian Congo was relatively small, its relationship with the *Voix du Congolais* is instructive. A conflict gradually emerged between the missions and the colonial state, centred on who ought to be entrusted with the task of educating the Congolese elite.

At first glance it is easy to discern continuities between the *Voix du Congolais* and the established missionary press. It is no coincidence that the newspaper resembled *Signum Fidei* in its professed goal of forging the educated Congolese scattered across the colonial territory into a community of readers.[38] *Signum Fidei* had been founded in 1929 as an "organ for the former pupils of the Christian schools in the Congo" by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes*, a Catholic missionary order that, following its emergence in 1684 in northern France, rapidly gained a foothold in what is now Belgian territory, where it provided free schooling. In 1909 the Belgian colonial state had put this missionary order in charge of the *Colonie Scolaire* in Boma, a port city in western Congo and its capital at the time.[39] In its first few years its Congolese pupils were chiefly recruited as soldiers for the *Force Publique*, but in the inter-war period the *Colonie Scolaire* increasingly began to train its charges for office work within the administrative system. The

36 On the nexus of mission, conversion and literacy in Africa, see Newell, *Game of Life*, 83–97. On the case of South Africa, whose press history began with missionary publications as early as 1830, see L. Switzer, "Introduction. South Africa's Alternative Press in Perspective," in *South Africa's Alternative Press. Voices of Protest and Resistance*, ed. L. Switzer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On the influence of missionaries on the dissemination of literacy in the German colonies, see L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, eds., *The Rulers of German Africa 1884–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 208.

37 C. Vanderpelen-Diagre, *Écrire en Belgique sous le regard de Dieu. La littérature catholique belge dans l'entre deux guerres* (Brussels: Complexe, 2004), 18.

38 The following remarks are based on the perusal of issues of *Signum Fidei* from 1933, 1935 to 1940, 1947, and 1952 to 1954.

39 See A. Bavuidinsi Matondo, *Le système scolaire au Congo-Kinshasa. De la centralisation bureaucratique à l'autonomie des services* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).

Signum Fidei newspaper provided graduates of this mission school with a journalistic home and, with its commitment to Catholic Action, safeguarded their links with the Catholic missionary milieu. The *Voix du Congolais* resembled *Signum Fidei* in a number of respects: layout and sections, content, didactic articles offering advice on correct behaviour, and a tendency to propagate desirable recreational activities such as team sports. In addition, *Signum Fidei* had already explicitly addressed its readers as an "elite," very much in accord with the process of elite formation unfolding within the context of the colonial state's postwar reforms.

But there were also parallels at the level of personnel. The editorial team of the *Voix du Congolais* featured many permanent employees who had been educated at the *Colonie Scolaire* in Boma or at other secondary schools run by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes* and who had then found work in the colonial administration in Léopoldville. One prominent example is the aforementioned chief editor Antoine-Roger Bolamba. In the 1930s *Signum Fidei* published his poems, articles about individuals and obituaries. As the winner of a literary contest organized for Congolese in 1939, he had made a name for himself within the European colonial milieu. His stories subsequently even appeared in *Brousse*, a cultural periodical with a European readership published under the patronage of the General Government.[40] Jean-Marie Domont, who replaced Jean-Paul Quix as the newspaper's European patron in the summer of 1946 after illness had prompted him to resign, had also attended one of the schools operated by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes* in the Belgian city of Namur. Prior to his work for the *Voix du Congolais*, Domont had been a territorial official in Boma, home to the *Colonie Scolaire*, from which many members of the newspaper's staff had been recruited.[41]

The *Voix du Congolais* faced a direct competitor in the shape of the *Croix du Congo*, a weekly newspaper established in Léopoldville in 1932 that was run by the other important missionary society in the Belgian Congo, the Scheut mission. This Roman Catholic male order, which was founded in 1862 near the Belgian

40 Bolamba won with the story "Les aventures de Ngoy, héro légendaire des Bangala," about a Congolese servant of Europeans. It was published in 1940, chapter by chapter, in *Brousse*. A number of short stories by the same author also appeared after 1945. A.-R. Bolamba, "Le singe de caméléon," *Brousse* no. 3–4 (1947); A.-R. Bolamba, "Un fils qui voulait être plus malin que son père," *Brousse* no. 3–4 (1949): 25–26.

41 On Jean-Marie Domont's career in the colonial administration, see A. Lafarge Bembika, *Sur les pas de pionniers bâtisseurs. Centenaire de l'établissement des frères des écoles chrétiennes au Congo 1909–2009* (Kinshasa: Fréres des Écoles Chrétiennes, 2009), 102; "Chronique de la vie indigene et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 15 (May-June 1947): 666–667.

capital and saw its mission as global in character, had established itself in the Congo Free State at the request of Belgian King Leopold II, its goal being to convert and educate Congolese children in mission schools. Initially, the Scheutists had run the aforementioned *Colonie Scolaire* in Boma. But when the Belgian state took over the colony in 1908 it put the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes* in charge to mark a new beginning. This also instigated the latent rivalry between the two leading Catholic missionary orders, which found reflection in parallel educational institutions for Congolese that encompassed both secondary schools and recreational establishments.

The *Croix du Congo* was a media expression of the attempt by missionaries of the Scheut order to integrate graduates of their schools into Catholic Action. As a "Congolese weekly" the *Croix du Congo* was headquartered at the Church of Saint Pierre in Léopoldville.[42] As a French-speaking journal it addressed itself to literate Congolese and mainly provided information on the activities of the Catholic establishments run by the Scheut order.[43] Pervaded as it was by Christian semantics and symbolism, however, the newspaper also printed news from all over the world. It reported on the latest doings of former pupils, their associations, everyday lives and careers. The *Croix du Congo* was a medium for former pupils of the Scheut mission schools, who made contributions as authors from every corner of the colony. The articles often struck an edifying or didactic tone and sought to impart the values and lifestyle propagated by the mission schools as part of a Christian life. Photographs displayed and promoted monogamous marriage, church weddings and wage labour, which supposedly guaranteed a life pervaded by bourgeois culture, centred on a home of one's own and a nuclear family. The newspaper's objectives were geared towards those of Catholic Action, in other words it sought to turn its readers and authors, as former mission school pupils, into apostles of everyday life who would advance the evangelization of Congolese society and spread Christian morality within their immediate environment.

The *Voix du Congolais* placed a question mark over the monopoly enjoyed by the *Croix du Congo* as the francophone voice and information source for educated Congolese. On a superordinate level this newspaper, so close to the colonial state, signalled to the Scheut missionaries the end of their dominance within post-school elite-making. The missionaries' new prospect was reinforced in the wake of shifts of political power in Belgium immediately after the Second World War: after many years of the pre-eminence of the *Parti Catholique*, the Lib-

42 *Croix du Congo*, 11 February 1934.

43 The following remarks are based on perusal of random samples of the *Croix du Congo* from the 1934 to 1945 period.

erals took over the colonial ministry in 1945 once again. Representatives of Catholic Action smarted at the loss of their political allies in Brussels. The introduction of the first state schools and the provision of subsidies for Protestant schools, as initiated by Liberal colonial minister Robert Godding, awoke fears that the cultural struggles over the confessionally-based school system might flare up again in both metropole and colony. As the flagship of the colonial state's elite-making, the *Voix du Congolais* put the Catholic missionaries in a tight spot.

In the *Croix du Congo*, we can discern these pressures by reading between the lines. Shortly after the appearance of the *Voix du Congolais* an editorial in the *Croix du Congo* welcomed the new newspaper in a spirit of goodwill. In addition to its layout the editorial praised the prospect of the elite of the Belgian Congo being able to put their concerns to the authorities openly.[44] The editorial concluded, however, by pointing out that the *Croix du Congo* had already provided Congolese authors with a forum for years. It evoked its dazzling record of printing hundreds of articles by "evolved blacks."[45] The *Croix du Congo* rapidly adapted to competition with the *Voix du Congolais*. By the end of 1945 it had modified its masthead by adding the slogan "the newspaper of the Congolese *évolués*." It devoted more column inches to reports and commentaries on social affairs in the colony. It also took up discussion topics found in the *Voix du Congolais* and printed guest articles by staff from the rival publication, such as Bolamba.[46] The *Croix du Congo* was by no means rendered superfluous by the *Voix du Congolais* – in 1952 it enjoyed a print run of 5,500 per edition, growing to 8,000 in 1956.[47]

Hence, basing ourselves solely on the print media we might conclude that the *Croix du Congo* made a tacit arrangement with the new situation. But if we examine correspondence between actors within the Scheut mission we find that they felt pressured by the colonial state's elite-making within the media field. Because the *Voix du Congolais* recruited its editorial team chiefly from among graduates of the establishments run by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes*, institutions close to the colonial state, the Scheutists found themselves falling behind their missionary competitors. Furthermore, the *Croix du Congo* was worried that it might lose both readers and authors. This aspect weighed all the more heavily due to the broad resonance enjoyed by the *Voix du Congolais:* it presented itself as cross-confessional and was independent of the church. The new pub-

44 N.n., "La Voix du Congolais," *Croix du Congo* (4 February 1945).

45 Ibid.

46 A.-R. Bolamba, "Silhouette Indigène," *Croix du Congo* (4 February 1945).

47 Report on the extramural activities of the Scheut mission in Léopoldville, 1952, KADOC/Z/III/d/2/7; correspondence on the *Croix du Congo* (20 December 1956), KADOC/G/XIII/b/4/2.

lication addressed its educated authors and readers not as the alumni and apostles of evangelization but as *évolués*. Or to echo the conceptual framework of the time: as future members of a new elite, close to the colonial state, to whom the General Government held out the prospect of helping shape the territory's fate.

No surprise, then, that contemporary actors within Catholic Action were alarmed by the *Voix du Congolais*. As they saw it, the newspaper was not just an alternative communicative space for *évolués* but also a media-based means of education to which, for the first time, the Catholic missionaries had no direct access. They interpreted the publication as a portent of an increasingly laicist colonial state, as the first step towards a process of elite formation without the missionaries' involvement. Less than two months after the *Voix du Congolais* first appeared, Georges Six, the highest representative of the Scheut order and apostolic vicar in Léopoldville, received a letter.[48] A concerned missionary in the Congolese hinterland wrote of a recent conversation about the new newspaper. He made an urgent appeal for a form of Catholic Action tailored to the *évolués*[49] in order to maintain the Christian moral influence on the elite. The author presented himself as a spokesman for a number of missionaries who had come to the same conclusion when discussing the situation, namely that the *évolués* had not yet developed to the point where the missions could leave them to themselves or the colonial officials. They regarded the slogan of the *Voix du Congolais*, "by Congolese, for Congolese," as premature. In fact, as these missionaries saw it, their educational task remained vital – "for Congolese, by missionaries" was how this missionary expressed his preferred approach.[50]

Henceforth the Scheut institutions, which faced major constraints of staffing and finances, were even more insistent that their members must engage personally to influence Congolese school leavers. For example, the head of the *Croix du Congo*, Père Liétaert, addressed himself to all mission establishments in the Belgian Congo requesting that they actively support the Catholic media aimed at the *évolués*. According to Liétaert the *Croix du Congo*, aligned with Catholic Action, was the only one to offer the *évolués* a "good read, interesting and instructive."[51]

48 The roots of the present-day archdiocese of Kinshasa lie in the apostolic vicariate of Léopoldville established on 11 May 1888. Between the mid-1930s and the mid-1950s the vicariate was split into a number of subdivisions. The apostolic vicariate of Léopoldville gained the status of archdiocese in 1959. From 1965 to 1989 Joseph-Albert Malula headed the diocese as the first Congolese archbishop.

49 Letter to Georges Six, provincial bishop of Léopoldville, 3 March 1945, KADOC/O/II/b/9/5.

50 Ibid.

51 Letter from Liétaert to Georges Six, provincial bishop of Léopoldville, 20 September 1947, KADOC/P/II/b/11/12.

He warned of the growing rivalry within the media triggered by the appearance of government publications such as *Voix du Congolais* and *Etoile-Nyota*, which he viewed as a form of ideological competition.[52] He also railed against periodicals such as *Progrès*, published in Elisabethville,[53] which sought to undermine the missionaries' evangelization.[54] Liétaert mentioned the project being pursued by the General Government's *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes*, which planned to publish a French-language weekly for *évolués* in addition to the *Voix du Congolais*. The fears expressed by Liétaert in his letter are testimony to the Scheut missionaries' self-image as the guardians of the *évolués* and the threat to this status posed by the new colonial elite-making policy:

> This would be another step in the direction of a neutral and worldly attitude on the part of the *évolués*' press, as well as towards the state's supplanting of the missions' responsibilities. It would thus be another ace up the sleeve of those who seek to distance our developed Christians from the missionaries and to limit our moral influence on them.[55]

In the end the General Government did not produce this weekly for *évolués*. One year later, however, the Scheut press launched a competitor to the colonial state's new media. From 1948 on *Kongo Ya Sika* addressed itself chiefly to the non-literate population, seeking to attract the same target group as the General Government's *Nos Images*.

State and missionary actors thus vied to exercise an influence on the Congolese elite. Private correspondence between a mission school graduate and his former teacher provides an insight into how this elite related to the changed media situation in the Belgian Congo. Antoine-Marie Mobé, the Congolese party in this exchange of letters, had attained the highest possible level of education by graduating from the *grand séminaire* in Kabwe in 1944. He opted not to enter the priesthood, however, and instead signed up to become an office assistant within the colonial administration. In his spare time, he promoted the *Voix du Congolais* and in 1947 he was named the sixth most successful recruiter of new subscribers.[56] Over the years he built up a reputation as a diligent and critical correspondent. Mobé maintained private correspondence with Georges Kettel, the seminary's former rector. The latter was mentioned by name – as one of

52 Ibid.

53 On the publisher of *Progrès* and *Echo du Katanga*, see Vellut, "Decoster."

54 Articles critical of the missions prompted a lively exchange of letters between high-ranking actors in the Scheut order; Presse hostile, 1948, KADOC/O/II/a/11/18.

55 Letter from Liétaert to Georges Six, 20 September 1947, KADOC/P/II/b/11/12.

56 See A.-R. Bolamba, "Concours de Propagande," *Voix du Congolais* no. 24 (March 1948): 121.

the critics of the colonial state's elite-making – in the aforementioned appeal for help penned by the Scheut missionary.[57] Likely prompted by his article on the work ethic recently published in the *Voix du Congolais*, Mobé wrote to Kettel in 1949 regarding his journalistic work. The latter responded with great reserve, despite the fact that Mobé's newspaper article clearly evinced his priestly education. The article had been written in the style of a biblical exegesis and interpreted the cultivation of the garden of Eden as the origin of the work ethic. Mobé thus fit the ideal of an apostle of Catholic Action, one who propagated a Christian way of life beyond the church within his own milieu. Nonetheless, the rector was clearly displeased by the fact that Mobé's article had appeared in the *Voix du Congolais*. All Kettel could see in the newspaper was a symptom of the advancing decoupling of worldly education from religious schooling and he lamented the *évolués*' general tendency to abandon their missionary origins. He warned Mobé of the dangers posed by the newspaper, which rarely adopted a "clear Catholic position" and whose articles were characterized by a certain "superficiality."[58] The fact that Kettel also described the *Voix du Congolais* as "neutral" may be due to his displeasure at the newspaper's cross-confessional orientation: it integrated authors who had attended Protestant schools and, in its emphasis on the Christian faith, reflected the PSC's ideological opening in Belgium. According to Kettel, as a "good black layman" Mobé ought to try harder to fulfil his obligations: he should remind the *évolués* who they had to thank for their education, namely the Catholic missionaries.[59]

This example brings out the conflicts of loyalty faced by Congolese authors writing for the colonial state's media in light of the new and overlapping elite institutions. Not only did the colonial state actively address itself to a field it had previously left to the missions, but in the shape of newspapers and associations it also imitated their key instruments. The associated debates, couched in paternalistic terms, bring to mind modern-day parental disputes over the custody of underage children. The missions and the state were convinced that Congolese were not yet mature enough to take responsibility for themselves and still required a guiding hand. The Catholic missionaries continued to play an impor-

57 Kettel was rector in Kabwe, in the province of Kasai, where one of his students was Joseph Kasa-Vubu, later president of independent Congo. He expelled the latter from the seminary in 1939, declaring that he "belonged in the world." Kettel maintained lively correspondence with his former pupils and sent out a circular until at least 1948; letter from Kettel to Mobé, 10 October 1948, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

58 Letter from G. Kettel to Antoine-Marie Mobé, 18 August 1949, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

59 Ibid.

tant part in the planning and implementation of the colonial state's elite-building measures, whether in a consultative or executive role. The missions were too important to the colonial state to leave them out in the cold and through their engagement the missionaries sought to ensure their influence on former mission school pupils. Congolese authors, meanwhile, made pragmatic use of the opportunities provided them by the elite institutions established concurrently by missionary orders and the colonial state. Author and former seminarian Mobé published in both the *Voix du Congolais* and the *Croix du Congo*. For most secondary school graduates, mission schools and the institutions of the colonial state were first and foremost consecutive stages of a career path – of the kind they were predestined to follow within the colonial working world. The *évolués*-centred "pillar" that the colonial state sought to create among Congolese after 1945 not only possessed – in the shape of missionaries and officials – a number of architects with differing construction plans, but addressed itself to Congolese with ideas of their own.

Controlling reforms and controlling *évolués*

Those newspapers that sought to attract the small group of educated Congolese constituted new communicative spaces within the colonial public sphere.[60] When it comes to both authors and target group this public sphere – as well as other social realms – was segregated into European and African parts. In the larger cities, since the 1910s daily newspapers had been established with a European readership whose print runs remained within the range of 1,000 to 5,000 copies. The Catholic *Courrier d'Afrique* and *Avenir*, which was closely associated with the settlers, were published in Léopoldville. The province of Katanga, whose character was profoundly shaped by its resident Europeans, had four newspapers. In the capital Elisabethville the conservative *Essor du Congo* championed the interests of industrialists and settlers, while the *Echo du Katanga*, which was published in small numbers, stood out throughout the colonial territory for its anti-clerical and socialist views. Two other newspapers were published in Jadotville and Kolwezi. Settlers in the province of Kivu also had a publication representing them in the shape of *Centre Afrique*. In the third largest city, Stanleyville, *L'Echo du Stan* and *Le Stanleyvillois* competed against each other,

60 For an overview on public spheres and print media in colonial states, see E. Hunter and L. James, "Introduction: Colonial Spheres and the Worlds of Print," *Itinerario* 44, no. 2 (2020).

both expressing similar conservative and at times racist views.[61] While post-war Belgium was characterized by a highly diverse press, covering every political current, with more than fifty opinionated dailies close to the various political parties,[62] due to harsh press laws the newspapers in the colony had to tread carefully when it came to their coverage of political issues. In addition, the Congolese titles continued to be run paternalistically and published by the colonial state and missionaries. It would be quite wrong to think of the Belgian Congo's colonial public sphere as a realm of well-informed citizens engaging in the free exchange of views as envisaged by Jürgen Habermas.[63] To what extent, then, did the vernacular elite have a right to a say and the freedom to articulate its views? What kind of control mechanisms were at work?[64]

The *Charte coloniale* laid down strict regulations governing the press landscape. The Belgian colonial government had originally enacted the relevant paragraphs in 1922 in the context of its struggle against the religious healing movements of the Kimbanguists and Kitawala spreading throughout the colony,[65] and had subsequently modified them on a number of occasions.[66] The *Charte colo-*

61 Centre de Recherche et d'Information Socio-Politiques, "La presse quotidienne," 8–10.

62 On the history of the press in Belgium, see J. Servaes, "*Concentration and Competition in the Belgian Press," Communications* 16, no. 3 (1998).

63 Studies of colonial India emphasize the differences between the colonial public sphere and Jürgen Habermas's bourgeois public sphere as found in Western Europe. Sinha, "Britishness," 492; J. F. Codell, "Introduction. Imperial Co-Histories and the British and Colonial Press," in *Imperial Co-Histories. National Identities and the British and Colonial Press*, ed. J. F. Codell (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003). A study of the educated elite of the Gold Coast draws explicitly on Habermas's notion of the public sphere, though extending it to include associations and recreational institutions; Prais, "Imperial Travelers," 59. For the public sphere in late-colonial Tanzania, see E. Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania. Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). One reason for this may be that until the 1930s the British colonial administration took very little interest in the press and associations of actors categorized as non-political, making little move to interfere in their activities. For an example of this line of argument, see Newell, "Territory of Elites," 229.

64 The following analysis adheres to B. Weisbrod, "Medien als symbolische Form der Massengesellschaft. Die medialen Bedingungen von Öffentlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert," *Historische Anthropologie* 9 (2001): 270.

65 For the Kitawala movement, see N. *Eggers*, "*Kitawala in the Congo:* religion, politics and healing in 20th-21st century Central Africa" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2013). On Simon Kimbangu, see J. L. Vellut, Simon Kimbangu 1921: de la prédication a la déportation. Les sources (Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre Mer, 2010).

66 On the modifications made to the press laws, see D. T. Kabiena, "Réglementation de la presse au congo belge: approche systématique," in *Aspect de la culture à l'époque coloniale en Afrique centrale. Presse. Archive*, ed. M. Quaghebeur (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 52–59.

niale empowered the General Government to put a stop to the dissemination within the media of ideas it classified as subversive.[67] Within this framework the import and distribution of publications printed outside the colony were sometimes prohibited by decree. Here the concept of "endangering public order," which was open to interpretation, served the General Government as rationale.[68] The colonial authorities also reserved the right to carry out far-reaching interventions when it came to the Belgian Congo's press products. The founding of a newspaper or the publishing of any other kind of text on colonial territory required the prior permission of the General Government. This could be withdrawn at any time, at short notice and potentially with permanent effect. Violations of these laws were prosecuted and could result in a six-month prison sentence.[69] The authorities, then, did not envisage freedom of expression or freedom of the press in the Belgian Congo. Every written word had to be assessed by the colonial government before being made public.

Likewise, the *Voix du Congolais* provided no counterweight to the colonial state. It was in fact connected with it in a variety of ways. Published by the *Service de l'Information pour les Indigènes*, a subdivision of the AIMO, in institutional terms it was part of the General Government. The fact that the elite's communicative space was based on a printed medium and required literacy made it easier for the colonial state to exercise control. The idea here was that through this medium the debates and ambitions of the elite would be given a public airing and directed along prescribed paths. The colonial authorities thus kept a close eye on the development of elite's views in the newspaper. While the post of editor-in-chief was occupied by a Congolese, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, a European advisor was on hand to supervise his activities.[70] Articles were printed only once they had been thoroughly checked. Certainly, during the entire period of the existence of the *Voix du Congolais*, it published many articles written abroad that shone a negative light on colonialism or on Belgian colonial policy. Nonetheless, these

67 Kadima-Nzuji, *Littérature*, 45.

68 Claessens, *La Presse*, 9.

69 Ibid., 8 – 10. An analysis of the press laws in the Belgian Congo is provided by A. Durieux, *De la liberté de la presse en droit belge colonial* (Brussels: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1958), 6 – 28.

70 The colonial government likely intervened in the content of the editorials written by Bolamba. But it would be going too far to state that Congolese were not truly the authors of their articles. This is the claim made in an interview by the Belgian publisher of Paul Lomami-Tshibamba's novels. He asserts that as patron of the *Voix du Congolais* Domont wrote the editorials rather than Bolamba. But there are no indications of this in the sources; G. A. Deny, "Éditeur de Lomani Tchibamba et de naigiziki. Témoignage recueilli par Emile van Balberghe," in *Papier blanc, encre noire. Cent ans de culture francophone en Afrique centrale (Zaïre, Rwanda, Burundi)*, eds. M. Quaghebeur and E. Van Balberghe (Brussels: Labor, 1992), 296.

articles were either abridged or accompanied by a detailed editorial commentary that neutralized their criticisms or "corrected" them on the basis of colonial ideology.[71] Editor-in-chief Bolamba made it clear on a number of occasions that there was no room in the publication for highly critical contributions sent in anonymously.[72] Time and again, these interventions provoked claims that the newspaper was a propaganda sheet that let any kind of criticism go by the board. In his editorial Bolamba tried to rebut this notion, repeatedly highlighting the newspaper's success in championing the demands of the Congolese elite.[73]

We cannot be sure of the precise extent to which the articles in the *Voix du Congolais* were subject to censorship. The few studies of the newspaper are limited to speculations. Congolese literary scholar Mukala Kadima-Nzuji asserts that the newspaper's writers were free to express their views in the first few issues but that the authorities increasingly intervened from the fifth issue onwards, when the debate on the reform of elite status threatened to get out of hand.[74] In 1949 the *Revue Coloniale Belge* thus described freedom of opinion in the *Voix du Congolais* in fitting terms: the *Service de l'Information et de la Propaganda*, the *Revue* contended, granted Congolese authors "comprehensive freedom of opinion under the discreet tutelage of the relevant authority."[75]

Nonetheless, the limits to the freedom of expression allowed by the General Government were not set in stone. What one might legitimately criticize, the form this critique might take and who might advance it were governed by a rather arbitrary approach and changed over time. Hence, the Congolese authors who put forward their demands in the *Voix du Congolais* or other media walked a fine line. They had to develop a sense of what criticism was acceptable and would evade sanction, operating in a grey zone between the tolerance of the colonial state and illegality. Entering this zone was particularly problematic in those newspapers that were authorized by the General Government but to which, in contrast to the *Voix du Congolais*, colonial officials had no direct access. Thus, the General Government was presented with displeasing reports from these

71 For instance, in a commentary the editorial team vehemently contradicted the accusation that the colonial administration made too little effort to advance the *évolués*' interests. "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 20 (November 1947): 877–878.

72 A.-R. Bolamba, "Lettres anonymes et faux rapports," *Voix du Congolais* no. 15 (May-June 1947).

73 A.-R. Bolamba, "Bilan de quatre années d'effort," *Voix du Congolais* no. 33 (December 1948).

74 Kadima-Nzuji, "Autour," 20. With reference to anonymous sources, US-American historian Roger Anstey writes that it was not until 1955 that the authorities eased off again; Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 200.

75 C. Goebel, "La presse coloniale Belge et son évolution," *Revue coloniale Belge* 100 (December 1949): 772, quoted in Claessens, *La Presse*, 31.

media only after they had been published. This put the authors in an ambivalent position: they could submit more critical articles but made themselves vulnerable to attack. For example, when an African author writing in the *Croix du Congo* in 1954 reported on the arrest of an alleged supporter of the Kitawala movement, whose subversive influence the colonial administration feared, a note was appended to his service record. While the information in his article was correct, his reference to the integrity of the detainee was viewed as an explicit criticism of the colonial administration.[76] *In fine:* as guardian of the press the General Government had broad scope for interpretation when assessing articles. Often, whether authors had overstepped the limits of freedom of expression, whether they had put their career – or more – on the line through their journalistic activity, was something they only found out afterwards.

To sound out the limits of freedom of expression in the *Voix du Congolais* we also have to consider local colonial officials' arbitrary pre-censorship of articles. Among colonial administrators, territorial officials occupied an important position. Situated at the lowest administrative level, they carried out a wide range of tasks; after 1945 these included implementing the colonial state's elite-making policies. As representatives of the colonial state, even in the colony's remotest regions they embodied European rule and they had to enforce this claim to hegemony *vis-à-vis* the local population. In a novel, Malian writer Amadou Hampâté Bâ characterizes the territorial administrators as "gods of the bush" in light of their substantial powers.[77] Through the quotidian display and performance of hierarchical difference between Africans and Europeans, these officials put a face on the colonial order.

Many of the Congolese authors writing in the *Voix du Congolais* worked as office assistants in the local colonial administrative system. The colonial hierarchy was reflected in the workplace: in administrative offices – but in every other part of the working world as well – African clerks were always subordinate to a European superior whose instructions they were required to follow.[78] They typed up letters as instructed; their personal views were not required. The territorial officials perceived it as a threat to their power that their office assistants could now forge a direct connection with the colonial government as contributors to the

76 Correspondence between various offices of the colonial administration and the Prescobel news agency concerning a sensitive article in the *Croix du Congo* (December 1953-April 1954), AA/GG/5418.

77 A. Hampâté Bâ, *L'étrange destin de Wangrin* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1973).

78 On white-collar work in colonial Africa, see D. van den Bersselaar, "White-Collar Workers," in *General Labour History of Africa. Workers, Employers and Governments, 20th-21st Centuries*, eds. Stefano Bellucci and Andreas Eckert (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2019).

Voix du Congolais and potentially bring political pressure to bear. Time and again the vernacular elite called on the colonial government to make good on its promises, causing clashes with the local agents of colonial power. It was above all local officials who resisted the new colonial policy emanating from Léopoldville and Brussels, convinced the colonial order was at risk.[79] The territorial officials' intervention in the work of Congolese authors provides an initial example of the way in which conflicts between various actors within the Belgian colonial state were played out at the expense of the new collaborative elite.

Yet in the main it was the territorial officials that the *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes* tasked with promoting the newspaper. Particularly in remote regions, the newspaper's success depended on their support. In January 1945 they received a package containing several copies of the newspaper. In an accompanying letter the patron of the *Voix du Congolais*, Jean-Paul Quix, requested that they distribute sample copies among their administrative unit's *évolués*. In addition, they were supposed to encourage their Congolese office assistants to ask their friends to subscribe. Above all, the officials were to urge the "most capable of the évolués" to contribute to the newspaper.[80]

It is impossible to gauge the extent to which the local colonial officials did as they were asked. But we do know that at times they overstepped the limits of their authority and sought to influence the content of articles. The sources reveal a number of cases in which colonial officials insisted on perusing articles before they were sent to Léopoldville.[81] This tendency for Congolese authors' superiors to monitor and supervise their journalistic activities was particularly marked outside the cities.[82] The General Government learned of this practice and as the publisher it tried to counter any wilful pre-censorship by its officials. The provincial governors were informed that local colonial officials were authorized neither to rewrite articles nor to prohibit their dispatch. Authors were not to be discouraged through the censorship of their work. The true role of the *Voix du Congolais* must not be undermined: "To give the Congolese an outlet for their criticisms and de-

79 The "relatively high degree of independence from the centre of power enjoyed by the local administrative officials" is characteristic of colonial rule and is mentioned in a number of studies on German and French colonies; Eckert, *Herrschen*, 36.

80 Letter from Jean-Paul Quix to a number of territorial officials, 6 January 1945, AA/GG/10384.

81 Letter from Paul Ipupa to territorial administrators in Coquilhatville, 5 April 1945, AA/GG/10384.

82 A reader's letter in the *Voix du Congolais* from an administrative worker highlighted the fact that outside the cities the *évolués* were generally controlled more closely by the colonial officials: "In the interior a closer eye is kept on our conduct than in the major [urban] centres." "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 70 (January 1952): 35.

sires, and thus to help [the authorities] discover what the indigenous population is saying and thinking."[83] The colonial government thus expected the newspaper to enhance its knowledge, to provide it with an unclouded view of the elite's desires and complaints. As a print medium, the *Voix du Congolais* was supposed to provide a new form of colonial knowledge from which colonial rule could take its lead.[84] This medium was not only supposed to yield information about the new collaborative elite, but also to illuminate their views on the progress of developmental colonialism – and thus on the work of the local colonial officials.

Hence, although authors were well advised to refrain from articulating general critiques of colonialism in the *Voix du Congolais*, they knew how to use the newspaper as a forum for their interests. The elite's new communicative space was not an uncritical one. Authors made interventions in their social and cultural affairs. The scope for critique was delimited by the General Government in Léopoldville, which had in turn to gear itself towards the political programmes emanating from the Colonial Ministry in Brussels. The limits of the sayable thus expanded and contracted in alignment with the prevailing political agenda. The authorities wanted authors to express their views whenever reformist projects came up against local resistance. The authors, meanwhile, prompted corrections, here and there, to the colonial project – particularly when everyday reality was out of sync with the promises inherent in official policy.

Whether it was photographs of newly built houses produced by the state-sponsored building programme, of new school buildings and hospitals, or reports on the amicable encounter between Europeans and Congolese: precisely because the *Voix du Congolais* communicated an ideal-typical image of the Belgian Congo it set the standard by which readers and authors could assess their own lifeworlds. Only rarely did representations of the model colony bear comparison with actual living conditions. The *Voix du Congolais* was the medium through which this discrepancy was made public – and brought to the attention of the colonial authorities.

That the *Voix du Congolais* played a key role as intermediary within the processes of colonial reform is evident in the complaints put forward by the *évolués* of Matadi, about which the newspaper carried several reports in 1952 and 1953.[85]

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83 Letter from the governor general to the governor of Équateur province, 13 December 1955, AA/GG/6055.

84 For an introduction to the complex relationship between knowledge and power within European colonial rule, see Conrad, *Kolonialgeschichte*, 79–84.

85 These appeared in the "Chronique de la vie indigène" in the following issues: *Voix du Congolais* no. 77 (August 1952): 487–488; *Voix du Congolais* no. 79 (October 1952): 625–626; *Voix du Congolais* no. 83 (February 1953): 123; *Voix du Congolais* no. 84 (March 1953): 189–190; *Voix du*

The point of departure was an article in a section of the newspaper called the "Chronicle of Indigenous Life," in which critical reports on colonial realities often appeared. The editors frequently anonymized these articles, which were accompanied by a request to the relevant state authorities to follow up on the issues raised. This was the case when it came to complaints emerging from the port city of Matadi, whose authors presented themselves as "certain representatives of the Congolese elite."[86] Their spokesman drew attention to the everyday vexations of life in Matadi's African quarter. He bewailed the education and work ethic of the midwives in the hospital for Congolese, vented his frustration at the unfavourable location of the cemetery, which was outside the residential area, railed against the ban on domestic vigils for those who had died in hospital – and expressed his indignation at the unsanitary state of the public toilets.[87] This critique took direct aim at the failure to implement promised colonial reforms. Since 1949 the Ten-Year Plan, the centrepiece of Belgian developmental colonialism, had pledged to develop the medical and urban infrastructure for Congolese. European ideas about sanitation and medicine, such as hospital births, were only partially embraced within society, but constituted a distinguishing cultural hallmark for those *évolués* keen to assimilate,[88] who now demanded that the colonial government bring about the conditions envisaged in the Ten-Year Plan. In other words, the complaints emanating from Matadi were being put forward by members of the Congolese elite, who took the discourse of modernization literally.

Complaints like this were often to be seen in the *Voix du Congolais*. The report from Matadi, however, is one of the few cases for which we also have access to correspondence produced by the colonial administration, which reveals that the authorities made a serious effort to get to the bottom of such matters. From the desk of the editor-in-chief of the Voix du Congolais, the complaints from Matadi were fed into the hierarchical channels of the colonial bureaucracy. Before the article had even been published, Bolamba had sent a letter to the provincial governor in Léopoldville asking for clarification.[89] The governor in turn

Congolais no. 85 (April 1953): 261–262; *Voix du Congolais* no. 86 (May 1953): 481–485; *Voix du Congolais* no. 90 (September 1953): 625–626.

86 "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 77 (August 1952): 487–488.

87 Ibid.

88 Hunt, "Le Bébé," 428; N. R. Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*, 13; Mianda, "Colonialism," 154.

89 Letter from Antoine-Roger Bolamba to the governor of Léopoldville province, 26 July 1952, ARNACO/AIMO/73CC/82/244.

tasked his subordinate administrative officials with verifying and resolving the problems raised.[90]

The district commissioner and territorial administrator then gave the provincial governor assurances that the shortcomings had long since been reported at the local level and the relevant institutions informed. Further, they questioned the credibility and validity of the complaints and raised suspicions about who might be behind the anonymous article.[91] In a letter to the General Government the provincial governor subsequently denied all responsibility, describing the article as "unfounded and unreasonable."[92] The governor general responded promptly with a sharp rebuke,[93] reproaching the provincial governor and his staff for having provoked these public complaints by failing to inform the population about measures intended to improve the situation.[94] The governor general was not concerned about the authors of the article, who were known to the *Voix du Congolais* and may have been granted anonymity for their own protection. The colonial government was far more concerned about its officials' deficient efforts to implement the Ten-Year Plan – failings that had been laid bare by the *Voix du Congolais*.

In the governor general's letter to his subordinate officials, we find a sentence that provides an insight into how the *Voix du Congolais* dealt with the criticism submitted to it and the role the colonial government allocated to the newspaper as a result:

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90 Letter from the governor of Léopoldville province to the district commissioner of Bas-Congo, 7 August 1952, ARNACO/AIMO/73CC/82/244. The relevant file includes several exchanges of letters referring to the articles in a single issue of the *Voix du Congolais*. One can only imagine the scale of the correspondence triggered by the total of 165 issues. Presumably, the complaints were evaluated differently, according to region or date for example. In the case discussed here, in any event, Bolamba reiterated to the governor of Léopoldville province his request that the grievances be addressed by highlighting Matadi's importance as the largest port city in the Belgian Congo. Situated on the Congo River and providing access to the Atlantic, Matadi was the key hub for trade, transport and communication with Belgium. Here goods arriving from the navigable mouth of the Congo River were transferred to rail and transported further via the Matadi-Léopoldville railway line.

91 Letter from the territorial official in Matadi to the district commissioner of Bas-Congo, 15 August 1952 and 18 August 1952; letter from the district commissioner of Bas-Congo to the governor of Léopoldville province, 28 August 1952, ARNACO/AIMO/73CC/82/244.

92 Letter from the governor of Léopoldville province to the General Government, 16 September 1952, ARNACO/AIMO/73CC/82/244.

93 Letter from the governor general to the governor of Léopoldville province, 8 October 1952, ARNACO/AIMO/73CC/82/244.

94 See ibid.

> I feel I must remind you that the statutes of the *Voix du Congolais* grant it effective freedom of opinion. Even if the official responsible for the indigenous press manages to prompt the articles' authors to tone down certain statements, he cannot rid the newspaper of all criticism submitted by its correspondents. Otherwise, it would lose its *raison d'etre*.[95]

For the General Government, the point of the newspaper was to provide the Congolese population with a platform for complaints. Along with its correspondents, the publication served as a seismograph gauging sentiment among the vernacular elite and the colony's state of development. The *Voix du Congolais* established media-based communication between the elite spokesmen of the population and the centre of political power in the Belgian Congo, a form of communication that left out the local colonial officials. This furnished authors and contributors with unprecedented opportunities to articulate their views. They could work on the premise that the colonial government would take their critique seriously if it deemed it legitimate, instructing its administrative officials to try to find solutions.

Because of this new voice of the Congolese elite, the European superiors, whether administrators or firm owners, could no longer do as they pleased. Now they were under observation and their misconduct was made public – for the most part by their own clerks. If a territorial administrator saw his office assistant sitting at the typewriter, he could no longer be sure whether he was merely typing up the letter he had just dictated or giving vent to his grievances about local living conditions. This was a key factor motivating these officials' efforts to control correspondents' activities.

The General Government's elite newspaper thus entailed a reciprocal control function. The European authorities kept a sharp eye on the Congolese elite, just as the elite kept a close watch on the colonial administration's European representatives. When it came to the oft-criticized public toilets in the African quarter of Matadi,[96] after further calls for action had been published in the *Voix du Congolais* a correspondent reported that the colonial administration had finally arranged to have them cleaned several times a day.[97]

The tensions between territorial officials and the General Government triggered by the African elite's new opportunities to have its say in the *Voix du Congolais* also became apparent when its editors made trips to various parts of the colony. The promises of colonial reform emanating from the capital city of Léopoldville not only made it to the provinces through newspapers but also through

95 Ibid.

96 "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 84 (March 1953): 189–190.

97 L'Echotier, "Reportage à Matadi," *Voix du Congolais* no. 86 (May 1953): 484–485.

Fig. 6: Advisory Board of the *Voix du Congolais* with Jean-Marie Domont, head of the *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes* (centre). Of the individuals mentioned in the present book those appearing here are: Eugène Kabamba (second from left), Jean Bolikango (third from left), Etienne Ngandu (ninth from left), Jacques Massa (tenth from left) and Jean-Pierre Dericoyard (eleventh from left).

visits made by the staff of the *Voix du Congolais* – often to the territorial officials' chagrin.

The newspaper's core editorial staff did a considerable amount of traveling, a privilege denied other Congolese by rigid regulations on freedom of movement.[98] Whether on official business or for personal reasons, the authors writing for the *Voix du Congolais* used their sojourns to give talks at associations and to visit their correspondents and old schoolmates. Later they published articles in the *Voix du Congolais* on their observations and experiences, on the challenges

98 If Congolese wished to travel outside the territory in which they were officially registered they needed permission from the territorial administrator, a "relocation permit" and a "health visa." The form they had to fill in included information on their destination, route and the length of their trip. Travelers who failed to obtain the necessary documents were likely to be convicted of vagrancy. See Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 100.

and insights arising from their journeys, thus providing readers with the first reports written by Africans on the various parts of the colony.

As the newspaper's editor-in-chief, Bolamba spent a particularly large amount of time on the road.[99] At times his many travelogues read like a blend of inspection report and promotional tour for colonial reforms. In October 1948 he made a 90-minute stop in Lisala, which was predestined for high-profile through-traffic as an important trading site on the Congo River located between the cities of Mbandaka and Stanleyville. As it happens, the governor general had made a stopover there shortly before Bolamba visited the local *évolués*' association. When the mail boat Bolamba was traveling on reached the port of Lisala one day late, a car sent by the local colonial administration was there to meet him and take him to the association known as the Cercle Ryckmans.[100] This group, named for the former governor general, came under the purview of the territorial administrator and submitted regular reports on its activities to the *Voix du Congolais*.[101] On behalf of the Cercle Ryckmans, club secretary Paul Mongbanga welcomed their visitor from Léopoldville as a "pioneer of development."[102] In his speech Bolamba defended the Belgian colonial project against those who saw it as a mere attempt to exploit. According to Bolamba, this criticism only demonstrated the envy of those living in the neighbouring colonies. At the end of the day, he contended, the Belgians had done more to develop the colony in 50 years than other European countries had done in their possessions in two or three centuries.[103] He encouraged those present to get involved in the *Voix du Congolais*, which he described as compulsory reading for every Congolese: "We are our guardians' concern. Let us open our hearts to them and if something displeases us let us tell them about it."[104]

That morning in Lisala Bolamba underlined the newspaper's role as the champion of Congolese interests with considerable ostentation. He took out his notebook and invited the association members to tell him about their wishes and grievances, which he noted down. Office assistants, teachers and tradesmen complained about their low wages, while employees of the colonial administra-

99 Bolamba wrote several dozen reports on his journeys. Tellingly, a book containing a selection of his texts bears the title *Carnets de voyage*. See A. R. Bolamba and C. Cassiau-Haurie, *Carnets de voyage. Congo-Belgique 1945–1959* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009).

100 Report by Paul Mongbanga on Bolamba's visit, 10 October 1948, AA/GG/7921.

101 By October 1948 nine such reports had appeared in the section dedicated to associations' activities.

102 Paul Mongbanga's speech of welcome, 8 October 1948, AA/GG/7921.

103 Report by Paul Mongbanga on Bolamba's visit, 10 October 1948, AA/GG/7921.

104 Ibid.

tion assailed the fact that it took five years for them to be granted holidays. Others expressed criticism of the poor treatment they received from their European superiors and lamented the lack of medical facilities.[105] These grievances cropped up frequently in the pages of the *Voix du Congolais*, with the colonial government typically pledging action to resolve them.

The fact that the territorial official responsible for Lisala, who was also the Cercle Ryckmans's European adviser, was absent from the meeting was not without consequence.[106] A few days later he instructed Pierre Mongbanga, who was not only the secretary of the Cercle Ryckmans but also his office assistant, to provide him with a written report on the meeting. Because Mongbanga was responsible for producing a record of Bolamba's stay, in a letter from the territorial official he was admonished and gruffly reminded that the meeting should not have taken place in his absence, as the representative of the local colonial authority.[107] While the territorial official explained that an appointment with a legal official had kept him from attending, we are left with the impression that he had gone out of his way to prevent Bolamba's meeting with the members of the Cercle Ryckmans.

If so, this was no isolated case. In his travel reports, later published in the *Voix du Congolais*, Bolamba complained of the lack of support he had received from the local colonial administration in many places.[108] That local colonial officials in the hinterland were far from thrilled to see members of the elite from Léopoldville is evident in another article in the *Voix du Congolais*. Here an anonymous author complained that the territorial administrators in the colony's interior treated *évolués* from the capital as if they were "agents of Moscow."[109] Despite the fact that no such cases had been documented, from 1947 on the General Government urged its territorial officials to report communist sympathizers among the population.[110] As a result of this anti-communist hysteria the self-confident section of the elite was interpreted as subversive. The popularity of this perspective among colonial officials in remote areas, where educated Congolese were the exception, was a trans-imperial phenomenon.[111]

105 Ibid.

106 Notes by the territorial administrator of Lisala on Bolamba's visit, n.d., AA/GG/7921. It was not possible to make out the name of the territorial administrator in the documents.

107 Ibid.

108 Bolamba, "Impressions de voyage," *Voix du Congolais* no. 47 (June 1950): 99–102.

109 "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 39 (June 1949): 244.

110 See Gijs, *Le pouvoir*, 161.

111 On Portuguese Angola, for example, see Keese, *Living*, 106.

In any case, when it came to Bolamba's visit, what particularly stuck in the craw of the territorial official in Lisala was the fact that the association members were able to openly articulate their criticisms of local shortcomings. In his report Mongbanga had listed the individual criticisms put forward by association members along with their names.[112] That he included his own critique in this report, which he submitted to his superior, shows that he was unaware of the document's explosive character. Mongbanga had informed Bolamba that the medical establishments were doing a poor job of looking after the Congolese population and that some *évolués* had to put up with insults from their superiors. The territorial official, however, interpreted Mongbanga's critique as an "attack on the local health service."[113] What Bolamba, as an envoy of the colonial government, had presented to the members of the Cercle Ryckmans as a legitimate expression of opinion, the local territorial official regarded as hostility towards colonial authority. This incident shows that the elite's new opportunities to articulate their views were not immediately regarded as legitimate or acceptable in every quarter and that the degree to which they could make use of these opportunities often depended on the local colonial authorities.

Reading between the lines, in Mongbanga's reply to the territorial official we can discern a learning process that the vernacular elite had to undergo as a critical companion to colonial reforms. His letter is characterized by a semantic balancing act between loyalty and self-assertion that the *évolués*' spokesmen had to master *vis-à-vis* European authorities and superiors. On the one hand Mongbanga wrote that Bolamba should indeed have made his presence known to the local authorities. But this had simply not been possible.[114] On the other, he contended, his critique had not been an attack but merely "an account of the facts."[115] Mongbanga deftly toned down his bold response, however, by availing himself of the colonial cliché that the Congolese had a poor command of the French language: "I admit, of course, that my instruction in the French language is insufficient. I would request that you amend my phrasing and understand it as appropriate."[116]

Well aware of the risks of expressing one's opinion, the elite learned to envelop their criticisms in a cloak of circumspection – not just in their articles but also when in direct contact with those local authorities that, in practice, contra-

112 Report by Paul Mongbanga on Bolamba's visit, 10 October 1948, AA/GG/7921.

113 Notes by the territorial official of Lisala on Bolamba's visit, n.d., AA/GG/7921.

114 Mongbanga's response to the criticism of the territorial administrator of Lisala, n.d., AA/GG/7921.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid. Apart from getting one phrase wrong ("dans le bon terme" rather than "dans le bon sens du terme"), however, his French was free of error.

dicted the rhetoric of colonial development cultivated by the General Government. The authors were thus skating on thin ice when they used the *Voix du Congolais* as a forum for their demands. Yet it was not just institutionalized control by the General Government and unauthorized interventions by territorial officials that influenced the limits of the sayable, but also authors' self-censorship. Many took care not to be overly critical for fear of possible punishments and penalties. It is difficult to demonstrate the practice of self-censorship with reference to historical sources: we can analyse published articles but not texts abandoned due to caution or the revisions made to those ultimately published.

To sum up, in the wake of the post-1945 reforms the Belgian colonial government decisively expanded the Congolese elite's space of medial communication. But the tight limits on freedom of expression and the capacity to have one say reflected the official policy of the colonial government in Brussels and Léopoldville, and it was within this narrow field of action that Congolese authors' media interventions occurred. At times they came into conflict with representatives of the colonial administration who felt that their authority was threatened by the *évolués*' media-based scrutiny. Even if the elite public sphere could, to a certain extent, shine a light on the implementation of colonial rule, this elite realm was subject to control as well. The *Voix du Congolais* thus epitomized the ambivalences of colonial development after 1945.

Controls imposed by the colonial government, unauthorized interventions by local officials in the production of articles, and self-censorship in order to avert possible sanctions: authors held back, camouflaged their criticisms, and put forward their demands in a measured and polite way. While the voice of Congolese authors may have appeared too strident to some Europeans in the colony,[117] in reality they tended to be reticent and intimidated.

But it would be too simple to comprehend the *Voix du Congolais* as a colonial ventriloquist, with disempowered Congolese in the role of dummy. Certainly, the newspaper disseminated state propaganda acclaiming developmental colonialism, but the elite took this colonial discourse of progress and modernization literally. Authors used colonial propaganda to pursue their own agenda. They insisted on their points of view and demanded, with a degree of success, that the colonial authorities implement their promised reforms. In French and British colonies, it was African labour movements and politicians that articulated their demands in the official language of post-war reforms to wrest concessions from

117 Article in the *Essor du Congo* of 6 May 1945, quoted in *Voix du Congolais* no. 3 (May-June 1945): 92.

the colonial government.[118] In the apolitical Belgian Congo, which had virtually no trades unions, it was authors that took on this role as they made their voices heard in the press. The *Voix du Congolais* created a communicative space in which the colonial government, colonial officials and Congolese elites negotiated colonial change through a highly contentious process.[119] In the Belgian Congo after 1945 the vernacular elite's legal equality with Europeans was a particularly contested topic that rocked the foundations of the colonial order. The concepts *évolués* and "African elite" developed into tendentious ones within the public debate on the reform of the legal status of Congolese. In the *Voix du Congolais*, which played a crucial role in the genesis of the *évolués*' status, these concepts exemplified the legitimate "languages of claim-making and counter claim-making."[120]

118 See Cooper, *Decolonization*, 2–3, 10–11.

119 Ute Frevert is quite right to refer to a communicative space that "provides a broad arsenal of rituals, ceremonies and symbolic practices that reflect prevailing or desired political conditions but also (and to an even greater extent) help to produce and transform them." U. Frevert, "Neue Politikgeschichte. Konzepte und Herausforderungen," in *Neue Politikgeschichte: Perspektiven einer historischen Politikforschung*, eds. U. Frevert and H.-G. Haupt (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 16.

120 F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 24.

Debating the *évolué* status (1944–1948)

Law and colonial order: segregation by civility

In the second issue of the *Voix du Congolais* Paul Lomami-Tshibamba, who worked for the General Government and was one of the newspaper's founders, raised the issue of the *évolués*' role in colonial society.[1] Lomami-Tshibamba thought it unacceptable that the "developed inhabitants of the Belgian Congo" were still being treated like "natives."[2] In his article he described the *évolués*' ambivalent social role and their desire for equality with Europeans:

> Torn between the morals and attitudes of the natives, who are described as primitive, on the one hand, and Europeanism [*l'européanisme*] on the other, we do not know where to turn. In light of our native environment and our cultural orientation we believe with complete conviction that only total assimilation to our benefactors can represent our true social fate. Unfortunately, however, witness to, or ourselves victims of, the actions, gestures and attitudes of those to whom we believed we had assimilated ourselves, our aggrieved and embittered souls prompt us to believe that we have gone stray, or rather that we have deliberately been led astray from the path that must inevitably lead men to their social fate.[3]

Lomami-Tshibamba laid bare Belgian colonial policy's unfulfilled promise to grant the *évolués* legal assimilation on the premise of cultural assimilation. The explosive power of his article is evident in the fact that he suffered repression for writing it. The district commissioner responsible for the area in which Lomami-Tshibamba lived could not believe a Congolese had written these lines without a European's help, so he had Lomami-Tshibamba interrogated by the colonial police for three weeks.[4] But as there was no accomplice whose identity he might have revealed, he is said to have been flogged daily with a hippopotamus-hide whip, always early in the morning to avoid making him late for

1 On Lomami-Tshibamba's biography, see P. Haffner, "Une mémoire singulière. Un entretien avec Paul Lomani Tchibamba (1914–1985)," in *Papier blanc, encre noire. Cent ans de culture francophone en Afrique centrale (Zaïre, Rwanda et Burundi)*, eds. M. Quaghebeur and E. Balberghe (Brussels: Labor, 1992).

2 Lomami-Tshibamba, "Quelle sera notre place," 49.

3 Ibid.

4 To quote the account given by Lomami-Tshibamba to a Belgian television crew in the early 1980s: M. Stameschkine, *Boula Matari, Chronique des années coloniales* (Brussels: RTBF, 1984).

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his job at the General Government.[5] When Lomami-Tshibamba finally confided in his superior, the governor general intervened and brought the drastic sanctions to an end.[6] Lomami-Tshibamba's combative article kicked off an intensive debate on a special legal status for the aspiring Congolese elite. To understand why this debate represented such a great threat to the colonial order, it is helpful to scrutinize its historical background.

Generally speaking, colonial law reflected the colonial order,[7] with Africans and Europeans being segregated by differing legal systems.[8] While the colonial state applied the same civil and penal law to Europeans as in the mother country and granted them civil rights, different laws applied to Africans. The colonial state defined Africans as "other" and this included their status as legal subjects. As with the colony's other institutions, segregation in the legal system was justified with reference to differing levels of civilization.[9]

To each group, as classified on a racist basis, its law: this principle found reflection, in the German colonies for example, in "native law"[10] and in the British territories in "customary law."[11] Within the legal system of the Belgian Congo it was the *indigénat* that served as template. In the course of French colonial ex-

5 See Haffner, "Une mémoire," 130; Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 101; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 45; Riva, *Nouvelle histoire*, 40.

6 Stameschkine, *Boula Matari*.

7 For an introduction to this topic, see K. Mann and R. L. Roberts, *Law in Colonial Africa (*London: James Currey, 1991). A brief overview is provided by Marx, *Geschichte Afrikas*, 167; for case studies, see U. Schaper, "Law and Colonial Order. Legal Policy in German Cameroon between Civilising and Public Peace," *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 19 (2009); N. Camilleri, "Colonial Subjects and Others: Racism and Inequality during Italian Rule in the Horn of Africa," *Northeast African Studies* 20, no. 1–2 (2020).

8 See O. Le Cour Grandmaison, *De l'indigénat. Anatomie d'un "monstre" juridique: le droit colonial en Algérie et dans l'Empire français* (Paris: Zone, 2015); E. Saada, "The Empire of Law. Dignity, Prestige, and Domination in the Colonial Situation," *French Politics, Culture and Society* 20 (2002); G. Mann, "What was the Indigénat? The Empire of Law in French West Africa," *Journal of African History* 50, no. 3 (2009); I. Merle, "L'État français, le droit et la violence coloniale: Le régime de l'indigénat," in *Figurationen des Staates in Deutschland und Frankreich 1870–1945*, eds. A. Chatriot and D. Gosewinkel (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006); J. L. Comaroff, "Colonialism, Culture and the Law: A Foreword," *Law and Social Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2006).

9 Saada, "Empire of Law," 110.

10 On native law in the German colonies, see U. Schaper, "Entanglements and Interactions within the Plural Legal Order: The Case of the German Colony Cameroon 1884–1916," in *One Law for All. Western Models and Local Practices in (Post-)Imperial Contexts*, ed. S. B. Kirmse (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012); U. Schaper, *Koloniale Verhandlungen. Gerichtsbarkeit, Verwaltung und Herrschaft in Kamerun 1884–1916* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012).

11 See B. Ibhawoh, *Imperial Justice. Africans in Empire's Court* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

pansion since the 1830s, this system had initially been developed in Algeria to distinguish between subjects and citizens, and later it provided the legal foundation for the authorities' approach to the population in other French colonial possessions.[12] It was a system that brought together legal regulations and obligations, issued incrementally by the colonial government and applying exclusively to the African population, the so-called *indigènes*.[13] On the basis of a difference legitimized in racist and later cultural terms, though both were conceptualized as similarly immutable, the colonial state passed special laws and imposed repressive, often collective punishments with the help of the *indigénat*. Social and legal segregation as well as the absence of civil rights, political participation and freedom of opinion were the order of the day. Bespoke tribunals were established for Africans that drew on supposedly traditional laws. In the French empire the *indigénat* embodied the "legal inferiority of and systematic discrimination against the 'indigènes' and their subjugation to an often-arbitrary form of colonial power."[14] Emmanuelle Saada fittingly describes the *indigénat* as a repeatedly adjusted but permanent process of boundary-drawing between Europeans and Africans.[15]

In the Belgian Congo too, the law had many faces. The colonial territory was subdivided into many administrative units, to which Africans were assigned as legal subjects. Every district had a *chef indigène* appointed by the colonial administration, who was responsible for the administration of justice. As a result, the local authorities enjoyed substantial powers, while a patchwork of legal systems emerged in the *tribunal chefferies*.[16] In the course of an administrative reform in the 1930s, the colonial government transferred authority from the *chefs indigènes* to traditional courts,[17] which continued to rule on the basis of

12 An overview of the emergence and development of the *indigénat* is provided by Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 302 – 303.

13 On the *indigénat* in Algeria and other French colonies in Africa, see Le Cour Grandmaison, *De l'indigénat*; Saada, "Empire of Law"; G. Mann, "What was the Indigénat?." For a case study of New Caledonia, see I. Merle, *Expériences Coloniales. La Nouvelle-Calédonie. 1853 – 1920* (Paris: Belin, 1995).

14 Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 317.

15 Saada, "Empire of Law," 109.

16 The division into *tribunal chefferies* was carried out on an arbitrary basis and without regard for established communities. The 3,643 chefferies of 1914 had grown to a total of 6,069 within three years. See Ch. D. Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Westport: Greenwood, 2002), 78 – 81.

17 Liberal colonial minister Louis Franck first called for a reduction in the number of districts in 1920, in order to equip them with a modern administrative system. The authorities got started on this in 1938, so that there were 594 chefferies by 1945. Among other things, this entailed their merger into sectors; Brausch, *Belgian Administration*, 42.

supposedly African notions of law.[18] Taken together, these regulations constituted the *statut coutumier* as applied to the African population.[19] Every coercive measure and emergency law emanating from the colonial state applied to the members of this group: they could be obliged to work or resettled, they were censured by the territorial administrator for acts that Europeans were not punished for, and could expect draconian punishments (such as flogging). In Belgian and French Africa, the *indigénat* was a means of enforcing colonial rule, one that guaranteed the free disposability of colonial subjects but was given a legal veneer.

There were, however, exceptions to legal segregation. The emergence of intermediaries between the colonized and colonizing society, who included Christian converts, *évolué*s, war veterans and the offspring of African-European parents, necessitated new legal categories.[20] Could mission school graduates and office workers in the cities have the same legal status and be subject to the same harsh *indigénat* as uneducated peasants in the rural areas? Gearing itself towards the French example, Belgium adopted the option of a limited shift of status from subject to citizen, dependent on numerous preconditions.[21] In light of the growing group of Africans who were dissociating themselves from their supposedly traditional milieu and embracing European values, Belgian legal experts questioned the general validity of the *statut coutumier*. Should Congolese who were styled "civilized" not perforce be dealt with in a more civilized way – particularly before the law?

This theoretical prospect of assimilation and inclusion, writes historian Gregory Mann regarding emancipation from the French *indigénat*, exercised great appeal for the educated African elite. Things were no different in the Belgian Congo: the *évolué*s hoped that a special status would free them from the jurisdiction of traditional courts and the arbitrary decisions of a territorial official with the authority to impose punishments.

The Belgian colonial state had faced the issue of a differentiated legal status for Africans before the Second World War: it was as old as the colonial project in the Congo itself. This issue was thrown up by a group of Africans that was small

18 On the traditional courts in the Belgian Congo, see E. Boelaert, "L'Histoire de l'Immatriculation," *Aequatoria* 14 (1951): 7–8.

19 Ibid., 9.

20 E. Saada, "Citoyens et sujets de l'Empire français. Les usages du droit en situation coloniale," *Genèses* 53, no. 4 (2003): 21. For a study of the legal situation of the so-called *métis*, the offspring of African and European parents, in the French colonies, see Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie*.

21 On change of status in the French empire, see Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 314–315.

in number but important to the colonial project, individuals who worked for Europeans and sought to emulate their way of life, but who were nonetheless treated like the indigenous population in everyday contexts and within the justice system.

When it came to civil law, the distinction between European and African legal systems already existed in the Congo Free State.[22] Africans, however, were in principle ascribed two types of civil status: immatriculation placed them under the purview of the civil law applying to the territory's European residents, while those not immatriculated continued to be subject to traditional legal notions and institutions. Upon the establishment of the Congo Free State, two decrees presented all Africans with the prospect of entry, without precondition, into the so-called Register of Civilized Persons, in other words, immatriculation. By 1890, however, the governor general had already restricted the right to immatriculation to certain groups: soldiers who had served in the *Force Publique* for several years, graduates of the mission schools and workers employed in European establishments on a long-term basis. In much the same way as in the French empire at the same time, change of status, initially dependent on the will of the individual, thus gave way to the principle of assimilation, based on the "slowly advancing supra-individual evolutionary process of civilizing, through which individuals grow to maturity."[23] Immatriculation was intended for Africans in direct contact with Europeans and their institutions. The associated legislation was linked with the expectation, as part and parcel of the civilizing mission, that once subject to European civil law the immatriculated would gradually internalize European conceptions of morality and monogamous marriage. The officials charged with its implementation, however, viewed immatriculation as proof of assimilation rather than its prerequisite.[24] And because they considered Africans' way of life and values incompatible with European civil law, they soon began to refuse to immatriculate them. Henceforth, in fact, even those already immatriculated, about whose number no data is available, came under the traditional legal system, eliminating the incentivizing force of immatriculation.[25] In 1908, however, after the Congo Free State had morphed into the colony of the Belgian Congo, the Belgian state drew up the *Charte colo-*

22 A chronological overview of the European debate on a specific status for particular Africans in the Belgian Congo is provided by De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 129 – 159 and Young, *Politics*, 73 – 87.

23 Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 310.

24 L. Lotar, "Le Statut des Immatriculés," *Congo* 4 (1923): 453 – 457.

25 Sohier, "Le statut personnel des autochtones au Congo Belge," *Civilisations* 3, no. 2 (1953): 181.

niale, a constitution-like legal document that embraced the principle of immatriculation for Africans.

Yet initially immatriculation was no more than a theoretical possibility. Since the scope of the ascribed rights and the criteria for registration remained unclear, in the early 1920s the General Government sent out a circular advising territorial officials not to grant such status.[26] In the inter-war period, however, a growing number of actors spoke in favour of a more open-minded assimilation policy towards those Congolese who had left their villages to live in the cities and workers' settlements. It is no coincidence that the provincial council in Katanga was the first major body to advocate the reform of immatriculation, in 1923, as the influx of African workers had caused dramatic growth in this industrial region's urban settlements.[27]

That same year, the *Commission Permanente de la Protection des Indigènes* (CPPI) called for civil law to be extended to Africans once and for all.[28] After taking over the Congo, the Belgian state had founded the CPPI in 1909 as a symbol of the relaunching of the colonial project on a humanitarian basis. This advisory board was made up of representatives of the missionary orders active in the Belgian Congo, who were to protect Congolese interests and ensure the improvement of their moral and material lot, and the Belgian colonial government consulted it whenever legislative proposals or reform projects affecting the Congolese population were discussed. In the 1920s the CPPI subjected the topic of equality under civil law to in-depth scrutiny. That the missionaries came out in favour of such equality was ultimately due to their pious desire to see converts upholding a "morally strict" way of life: only on this premise were Congolese permitted a civil wedding, which the missionaries expected to strengthen monogamous marriage. The only ones who were supposed to benefit from immatriculation were those who had married in church, had been educated in mission schools and were in permanent contact with Europeans: "every black whose material or moral state of development no longer fits the traditional legal order."[29] That Africans' legal status must be geared towards their "state of development"[30] was an argumentational trope that remained the central theme of the debate on status reform after the Second World War.

26 See De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 132.

27 Young, *Politics*, 75–76.

28 On this section, see De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 132–135.

29 L. Guebels, *Relation complète des travaux de la Commission permanente pour la protection des indigènes* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1951), 341.

30 Ibid.

Yet eight years were to pass before the CPPI proposed a two-tiered form of immatriculation to the General Government in 1931. "Major immatriculation" promised to provide for the assimilation, under civil and penal law, of those holding a university degree or a comparable level of education, something that no one had yet attained due to the rudimentary education system.[31] Those who had attended the *grand séminaire* came closest, though by the end of the 1930s not more than 135 Congolese had done so.[32] Individuals applying for this "major immatriculation" were to be considered by a commission on a case-by-case basis. The "minor immatriculation," meanwhile, was to apply to the larger group of mission school graduates living in monogamous relationships, whose legal status was only gradually to be brought into line with that of Europeans.

The Colonial Ministry in turn presented the CPPI's proposed reform to another special commission, which drew up an alternative plan three years later. This provided for just one form of immatriculation. The CPPI objected that this legislative proposal from Brussels was too vague about the criteria for immatriculation. Two years later, in 1938, the CPPI presented the Colonial Ministry with an expanded catalogue of criteria, namely a minimum age of twenty-one, a high level of education, no criminal record, loyalty to the colonial state, conduct and lifestyle on a par with the European milieu, and monogamous marriage.[33] Because the immatriculated were to be placed on the same level as Europeans under civil law, the CPPI thought it crucial that candidates be subject to strict selection.[34] The Belgian discussion was very much in line with the state of the French debate on the criteria for the naturalization of colonial subjects. In the 1930s the colonial authorities worked on the assumption of group-specific and, in the French empire, spatially divergent levels of assimilation. This graduated model of ideal-typical civility purported to be inclusive, as it rewarded individual adaptation to the cultural concepts and values of French civilization; once again the nuclear family and a monogamous marriage played a central role. But at the same time this approach had an exclusionary effect because it still peddled the idea of differences based on 'race,' resulting in a highly restrictive practice of naturalization. Within the imperial ranking of differing levels of

31 Ibid.

32 Statistics in this vein can be found in Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 115.

33 De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 133 – 136.

34 Boelaert, "L'Histoire de l'Immatriculation," 9.

civilization, Indochina was placed above West Africa, while the eastern and central African territories came in last.[35]

On balance, all that remained of the inter-war debate on reform of the contentious system of immatriculation was an assemblage of proposals and counter-proposals. The reform project then came to a complete standstill with the outbreak of the Second World War. Besides, those actors tasked with tackling the issue had failed to agree which criteria ought to govern immatriculation and to what extent beneficiaries should enjoy legal equality with Europeans. The commissions and experts did agree that level of civility must determine the allocation of rights. But how this civility should be measured and who ought to benefit remained open questions.

Viewed from the perspective of the maintenance of colonial rule, the reform attempted and postponed time and again between 1890 and 1940 enabled the authorities to put off a decision on the controversial topic of a graduated legal system for the African population. Recognition of legal equality would have placed a question mark over the asymmetrical power relationship between Europeans and Africans within the colonial order, which was based on the unceasing production of difference.

Controversies within the colonial public sphere

But the debate on a special status for the vernacular elite flared up again during the Second World War.[36] This time the impetus came from educated Congolese themselves, who had aired their dissatisfaction at the still unresolved legal situation in the memorandum described in the first chapter. Signalling a new elite policy, when the war ended Gustave Sand took over as head of the *Affaires Indigènes et de la Main-d'Oeuvre* (AIMO), the very colonial official who had received the *évolués*' demands for status reform in Luluabourg in 1944 and had urged the

35 See E. Saada, *Empire's Children. Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 111–112; Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 308–309.
36 A similar picture prevailed in France's African colonies, where a special status under civil law for "elite natives" was discussed by the *Conseil Supérieur des Colonies* in the late 1920s. But in much the same way as in the Belgian Congo, it was a long time before the debate on this legal category between *sujet* and *citoyen* produced any results. Only in 1941 was this policy implemented in AEF through the introduction of the *statut des notables évolués*, which occurred as preparations were being made for the Brazzaville Conference of 1944. See Saada, "Empire of Law," 109.

Colonial Ministry to meet their demands.[37] The institution within the General Government that Sand now headed was in charge of the *Voix du Congolais*, whose authors joined in the debate on status.

Given the background to, and implications of, legal equality for Africans, the article by Paul Lomami-Tshibamba quoted at the start of this chapter, which was published in the *Voix du Congolais* in March 1945, was a highly charged contribution. Here Lomami-Tshibamba critiqued the colonial legal order, which assigned Africans and Europeans to segregated legal systems.[38] Yet he did not criticize the fact that the unequal distribution of rights was legitimized with reference to differing levels of cultural civility. Instead, Lomami-Tshibamba argued that a standing rule must finally be established for the *évolués* in light of their feats of cultural assimilation: not only should they no longer be subject to the African legal system, they should also be spared all those draconian coercive measures that enabled the colonial authorities to place the African population at its disposal. Ultimately, Lomami-Tshibamba was objecting to the failure to grant the *évolués*' equality with Europeans under civil law, which the system of immatriculation prior to the Second World War had in principle provided for:

> It is true that the legislature devised immatriculation to benefit us. According to the wording in the statute book of the Belgian Congo, this represents the "beginning of civilization" and, for us, a "means of attaining ALL CIVIL RIGHTS." But in view of the actual consequences of this formality we must give up our illusions. Far from being a "means of attaining all civil rights," the immatriculation of the civilized natives of the Belgian Congo is no more than an empty promise.

Lomami-Tshibamba not only reminded the colonial government of its unfulfilled promises but went further in his demands. According to him, the fate of the Congolese elite must be "total assimilation." What Lomami-Tshibamba was calling into question was the existing division between "civilized natives" and Europeans within the colonial legal order. The debate in the *Voix du Congolais* on the *évolués*' legal status thus got off to a spectacular start.

Lomami-Tshibamba's demands evidently went too far for the colonial government. Henceforth, it used its patronage of the newspaper to exercise greater influence over the selection of articles on status reform.[39] Between 1945 and 1948 this topic became the key focus of the newspaper, which simultaneously moderated the debate in the true sense of the term.

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37 Drawing on press reports we may reconstruct an organigramme of the AIMO. "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 13 (January 1947): 573 – 574.

38 On the following section, see Lomami-Tshibamba, "Quelle sera notre place," 49 – 50.

39 Kadima-Nzuji, "Autour," 20.

In the issue following the one in which Lomami-Tshibamba's article had appeared, editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba announced that "we have reached a point where blacks' progress necessitates the establishment of a special status for the *évolués*." Bolamba presented a ten-page exposition as the basis for discussion, which contended that candidates for this special status should have an educational qualification, an above-average income, a high degree of morality, "family discipline" and "professional conscientiousness." They should be granted certain privileges, namely equality with Europeans under civil law, their own class within public institutions and exemption from flogging.[40]

In response to Bolamba's proposal many readers sent in letters, some of which could be read in the next issue of the *Voix du Congolais*.[41] They expressed divergent views about who was and was not an *évolué*, in other words about who had earned the status of *évolué* in the first place. The Léopoldville-based author of one of the letters protested against the notion of having to prove that one had completed a certain amount of schooling, suggesting that mastery of a European language was sufficient. Another author championed the criterion of loyal service to Europeans, while another rejected the binary division of Congolese society into "natives" and *évolués:* he was against the idea of subsuming priests under the latter term. After all, he asserted, they were already "civilized blacks" due to their education and thus constituted a class in their own right. Antoine Omari in Stanleyville, a seminary graduate, submitted that status reform must guarantee the *évolués* better pay. What he had in mind here were Congolese employed by the colonial authorities, a group of which he was a member. Another reader highlighted the background to the question of what criteria ought to apply to an *évolué*, citing assessments made by the CPPI in the late 1930s. Another based his definition of *évolué* on the views articulated shortly before by a territorial official in the daily newspaper with the widest circulation in Léopoldville, the Catholic *Courrier d'Afrique*.[42] The discussion among the readers of the *Voix du Congolais* concerning the status of the *évolués* threw up more questions than it answered. The views they expressed were concerned not so much with the scope of this status but chiefly with who should and should not be consid-

40 A.-R. Bolamba, "Opportunité de créer un statut pour les évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 3 (May-June 1945).

41 "Discussion du Statut des évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 4 (July-August 1945): 140–148.

42 Ibid., 147–148. The author was referring to an interview with André Scohy, which was briefly mentioned in the previous edition of the *Voix du Congolais*. "Petites-Annonces," *Voix du Congolais* no. 3 (May-June 1945): 93.

ered an *évolué*, in other words, who ought to be granted such status and under what conditions.[43]

Beyond this, the spectrum of opinions emerging from the letters conveys the impression that the readers endorsed the proposal made by editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba in another crucial sense: the status of *évolué* must only be the first step towards the attainment of legal equality with Europeans. At first glance this seems surprising given that Bolamba's proposal was less ambitious than the "total assimilation"[44] demanded by Lomami-Tshibamba in his article two months earlier. In contrast to Lomami-Tshibamba, however, Bolamba argued that the *évolués* were not yet sufficiently developed to enjoy legal equality with Europeans. What Bolamba thus had in mind was a transitional solution, with the prospect of ultimate equality at a later point in time: "I am convinced that they will be fairly quick to bring us into line with the Europeans as soon as we are capable of it."[45]

Etienne Ngandu, one of the authors of the *évolués*' Luluabourg memorandum, also wrote in with his views on Bolamba's proposal. His demands, which the colonial authorities had viewed as a provocation just a year earlier, had now become the subject of public debate – one in which Ngandu participated vigorously.[46] He had sent in his letter to the *Voix du Congolais* from Lodja, a remote town in the east of the colony to which he had briefly been banished as a leading contributor to the *évolués*' memorandum.[47] He expressed support for Bolamba's proposal, but also recalled Lomami-Tshibamba's more far-reaching demand for complete equality. The planned status, he averred, must not be a permanent state of affairs but rather a "transitional stage," the ultimate goal being total legal equalization with Europeans: "A waiting room, [...] in which we bide our time in the hopes of entering the parlour at any moment."[48] Inherent in this metaphor is the fundamental motive underlying the demands made by the Bel-

43 The sometimes-heated contributions gave some readers the impression that this status had already come into force. The editors clarified that this was not the case in order to dispel false hopes. "Discussion du Statut des évolués," 148.

44 Lomami-Tshibamba, "Quelle sera notre place," 49.

45 Bolamba, "Opportunité," 81.

46 See for example E. Ngandu, "Ce qui dit le Noir chez-lui," *Voix du Congolais* no. 8 (March-April 1948); E. Ngandu, "La carte d'Évolué est-elle nécessaire," *Voix du Congolais* no. 26 (May 1948); E. Ngandu, "Civisme ou esprit social," *Voix du Congolais* no. 32 (November 1948); E. Ngandu, "Pierre, si tu veux entrer dans un édifice, laisse-toi tailler," *Voix du Congolais* no. 49 (April 1950).

47 On Ngandu's exile, see J.-M. Mutamba-Makombo, "Les auteurs du manifeste de 'Conscience Africaine': blancs ou noirs?," in *Images, mémoires et savoirs. Une histoire en partage avec Bogumil Koss Jewsiewicki*, eds. I. Ndaywel è Nziem and E. Mudimbe-Boyi (Paris: Karthala, 2009), 612.

48 "Discussion du Statut des évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 4 (July-August 1945): 140 – 148.

gian Congo's vernacular elite: unwilling to remain in the "waiting room" of colonial development, they were eager to become equal members of colonial society.

In September 1945, the provisionally final readers' letters on *évolué* status appeared in the *Voix du Congolais*. Probably at the General Government's behest, the editors declared the discussion over for now and entrusted the issue's resolution to the relevant politicians.[49] The General Government had in fact used the medial forum of the *Voix du Congolais* to gain a sense of its readers' views on *évolué* status. In addition, as publisher of the *Voix du Congolais* the General Government managed to quickly direct the heated debate going on within its pages into orderly channels. It thus took the wind out of the sails of those actors who, like Lomami-Tshibamba, were calling for the rapid implementation of legal equality with Europeans.

Bolamba's proposal for a "special status for the *évolués*" was consonant with an idea that had already been brought into the debate in the European press in January 1945 by AIMO staff. This was for an "*évolué* card" that would grant its holders several advantages and privileges after they had been thoroughly vetted.[50] On the level of content, then, the newspaper was in alignment with the reform proposals already drawn up by AIMO staff at the behest of the General Government.

The Europeans resident in the colony responded in divergent ways to the announcement that status reform would be the centrepiece of the colonial state's elite-making policy. Here the daily newspaper *Essor du Congo* served as a forum for a debate that had been sparked off as early as 1944. This publication had been founded in 1928 by conservative journalist Jean Sepulchre, previously in charge of an Antwerp-based newspaper specializing in colonial topics.[51] Sepulchre established the *Essor du Congo* in Elisabethville, the capital city of Katanga, the most economically important province in the colony due to European immigration and industrialization. As the daily newspaper with the widest circulation in the province, the *Essor du Congo* developed into the voice of the resident European elite. Despite its publisher's conservative stance, this daily provided politicians concerned with colonial policy in Léopoldville and Brussels with a broad spectrum of opinions held by the European settlers, industrialists

49 "Discussion du Statut des évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 5 (September-October 1945): 190.
50 On the scheme for a "special status" produced by the AIMO, see E. T. A., "Évolution ou révolution," *Essor du Congo* (8 February 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 126–127.
51 On his career, see Rubbens, "Jean Sepulchre," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 7-B, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1977).

and educated elites, the latter made up primarily of lawyers.[52] Under the heading "War Debts," the *Essor du Congo* published a series of contributions on the controversial elite-making policy. Responsible for the selection was Antoine Rubbens, who had obtained a PhD in Law from the Catholic University of Leuven. After further studies at the Colonial University in Antwerp and a brief stint at the Colonial Ministry in Brussels in the mid-1930s, he had transferred to the local colonial administration of the Belgian Congo. Rubbens then resigned from his post as royal prosecutor during the Second World War before establishing himself as a lawyer in Elisabethville.[53] His departure from the administrative service enabled him to make public statements reminding the colonial state of the responsibility it had taken on when it mobilized the Congolese population for war. In the article series he contrasted two views of the colonial state's elite-making policy, which differed in terms of the place they envisaged for the *évolués* within the colony's social order. One camp essentially regarded the new elite as an integral part of Congolese society, while the other considered it a separate group.[54]

Advocates of the "isolation solution,"[55] among them royal prosecutor Louis Zuyderhoff, believed the *évolués* should enjoy their own privileged status and regarded the division of Congolese society into "*évolués*" and "other natives" as a social fact. On this view, city districts of their own, social engineering measures and associations headed by colonial officials were intended to create a "well-run class of *évolués*" and partners both tractable and loyal.[56] While they backed the *évolué* status, as they saw it Congolese still had a long way to go to catch up with Europeans in a cultural sense. Those holding these views, then, were by no means out to achieve the legal equality of Europeans and Africans. What they had in mind was a legal status consonant with the *évolués*' supposed level of development, but a status that should be granted only after assessing individuals' moral, social and intellectual suitability.[57] Those in favour of promoting a vernacular elite expected this carefully selected "new class of natives" to form an *avant-garde* capable of accelerating the civilizing of Congolese society as a whole: "It is the elites that have always provided the crucial impetus in the life of a nation.

52 On the newspaper's history and ideological orientation, see Vellut, "Decoster."

53 On his career, see A. Reyntjens, "Antoine Rubbens," in *Biographie belge d'outre-mer*, vol. 9, ed. Académie Royale Science d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 2015).

54 L. Zuyderhoff, "La solution isolationiste," reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 116.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., 117.

57 Ibid., 124.

Our task, therefore, is to create this elite on the black continent, [...] leaders of the black race on the path to civilization."[58]

But support for the colonial state's elite-making policy was not underpinned solely by hopes of apt middleman. Some newspaper articles also articulated fears of the *évolués*' disaffection. Those failing to acknowledge the development of this elite, warned the anonymous writer of one piece, would face an "inevitable revolution."[59]

Meanwhile, supporters of the "integration solution" took up the cudgels against the elite-fostering approach adopted by the General Government.[60] In addition to the aforementioned Antoine Rubbens, this faction included Louis Ballegeer, another young Belgian lawyer. We can place both within the progressive Catholic milieu, which operated beyond Belgium's colonial circles.[61] But while Ballegeer was closely associated with the settlers' milieu and the business enterprises of Katanga, Rubbens maintained a certain distance from the province's establishment. He saw himself as an advocate of the interests of Congolese, whose gradual development as a collective he championed. In a text entitled "Plea for the Savages" he recalled the war effort of the "Congolese masses" at the "rubber front" and called for a policy focussed on the "underdeveloped" rather than the "black elite."[62] He even discerned the looming prospect of class struggle should the reforms to elite policy fail to benefit all Congolese.[63] Generally speaking, advocates of the integration solution believed that the colonial state's focus on the *évolués* represented a threat to the cohesion of society. The formation of an "*évolué* class," they argued, would distance this group even further from the masses.[64] Certainly, they too favoured the moralization of the elite through associations steered by Europeans.[65] But for them, Bolamba's proposed *évolué* status represented the inappropriate privileging of a group that already enjoyed advantages due to its education and living standard. The establishment of the *Voix du*

58 Ibid.

59 E. T. A., "Évolution ou révolution," *Essor du Congo* (8 February 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 127.

60 Rubbens, *Dettes*, 128.

61 See M. Poncelet, "Colonisation, développement et sciences sociales. Éléments pour une sociologie de la constitution du champ des arts et sciences du développement dans les sciences sociales francophones belges," *Bulletin de l'APAD* 6 (1993).

62 All quotation from A. Rubbens, "Plaidoyer pour le sauvage," *Essor du Congo* (3 May 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 128, 130.

63 Ibid., 129.

64 L. Ballegeer, "Le rôle social des évolués," *Essor du Congo* (5 May 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 137.

65 Ibid., 138–139.

Congolais as a voice for the *évolués* and the opportunity granted them to express their views in the debate on the status reform were referred to by one anonymous author as a "pedagogical and psychological error."[66] For him, the articles and proposals by Congolese authors on *évolué* status signalled a loss of colonial authority: "It is an odd business when the teachers ask their pupils to draw up a syllabus and to stipulate the method to be used."[67] Moreover, as the "integrationist" group saw it, the attention paid to the *évolués*' concerns represented an injustice, as only they had the necessary education to advance their demands, while the "natives" were not in a position to do so.[68] "The colonial government gives the best and largest piece of cake to the loudest and most demanding child in the family,"[69] as one author dramatically put it. In sum: the opponents of a special status for the elite condemned the *Voix du Congolais* not for its moderating role, but for amplifying elite interests: "Rather than helping make the voice of the Congolese heard, we have strengthened it."[70]

Ultimately, the reservations expressed about the *Voix du Congolais* exemplified the scepticism and disapproval that prevailed in parts of the European milieu with respect to the shift in colonial policy announced by the Belgian colonial government after 1945. The debate among European spokesmen in the press of the Belgian Congo shows that it was above all the *évolués*' status that was contested. The critique of the Léopoldville-based General Government's elite-making policy was particularly vehement in Katanga, where parallel structures were established to promote the *évolués* and the socioeconomic development of the Congolese population. This autonomy was nothing new. In the inter-war period, the UMHK mining company based there had already cooperated with the Catholic Church on school education without the involvement of Brussels or Léopoldville. The *Centre d'études des problèmes sociaux indigènes* (CEPSI) was then established in 1945 in Elisabethville, which sponsored social scientific research and facilitated the publication of texts on the Congolese population. Among the authors were scholars and other actors with an interest in colonial matters from Belgium and Congo, with Congolese contributing here and there. The UMHK financed this research centre, whose findings, as hegem-

66 P. G., "Existe-il un problème des évolués," *Essor du Congo* (14 July 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 133.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 L. Ballegeer, "Le rôle social des évolués," *Essor du Congo* (5 May 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 136.
70 From an article in the *Essor du Congo* of 6 May 1945. "Revue de la presse," *Voix du Congolais* no. 3 (May-June 1945): 92.

onic or rulers' knowledge, were of interest as a means of stabilizing the workforce in this industrial region. The founding members, in addition to colonial officials with anthropological interests, included Anton Rubbens and Louis Ballegeer, prominent advocates of the integration solution for the *évolués*.[71] Ballegeer, who maintained close relations with the UMHK, headed the CEPSI until 1950. On the centre's premises, meanwhile, Rubbens taught courses to the educated elite, which were intended to attune them to their social obligations to the rest of the population; in private correspondence he referred to this approach as an alternative to that of the *Voix du Congolais*.[72] When it came to elite formation after 1945, the demographically most European province, Katanga, where according to Rubbens "the indigenes [were becoming] ever more Belgian and the Belgians ever more Congolese," [73] retained a degree of independence *vis-à-vis* the colonial power centres in Léopoldville and Brussels.

But how did authors writing for the *Voix du Congolais* respond to the critique emanating from Katanga's European milieu? They commented pointedly on the articles in the *Essor du Congo* and repudiated, for example, accusations of elitism and egotism. In addition, they assured opponents of elite-making policy that the *évolués* were eager to do their best for the country and supported the initiatives of the colonial government.[74] The Europeans' long-established media and the vernacular elite's newly established newspaper entered into dialogue. The actors involved often disagreed, but they acknowledged the various positions and commented on them. We may interpret this as an initial sign of the emergence of a colonial public sphere, in which it was no longer just Europeans but Congolese authors too who made their voices heard.

The fronts evident in the debates within the media demonstrated to the General Government the socially explosive potential of *évolué* status. It was not long before vehement protests in the European milieu against the introduction of a special status for the elite prompted a change of course. By October 1945, senior members of staff at the AIMO were already referring to a "new orientation" in the *Croix du Congo*.[75] To counter any notion that they were engaged in the formation of a caste, they no longer made reference to a small group of educated *évolués*, but to a "much broader concept."[76] In the shape of a so-called "order of civic and

71 On the history of the CEPSI, see Rubbers, "Faire fortune"; Poncelet, "Colonisation."

72 Letter from Rubbens to Hulstaert, 14 February 1946, reprinted in H. Vinck, "In memoriam Antoon Rubbens," *Annales Aequatoria* 22 (2001).

73 Rubbens, "Responsabilités coloniales," reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 248 – 253.

74 "Revue de la presse," *Voix du Congolais* no. 3 (May-June 1945): 92.

75 "Un ordre mérite Civique," *Croix du Congo* (7 October 1945).

76 Ibid.

professional merit,"[77] a system was to be created that defined a variety of social groups, each of which was granted particular rights and obligations. This was intended to benefit not just a small elite but also the far larger group of the "detribalized," that is, non-elite Congolese resident in the towns and cities.[78]

This reorientation was also evident in the editorials of the *Voix du Congolais*, which now resumed its debate on status reform. In March 1946, editor-in-chief Bolamba issued a plea for a reform geared towards the "detribalized":[79] "It has been established that it is necessary to organize the detribalized in their entirety. Rather than instituting a special status exclusively for the *évolués*, in this way an order of professional, familial and social merit is to be created."[80]

The editorials on the *évolués*' status thus reflected the General Government's change of political direction. Within seven months, a reform project that had stoked expectations among the educated elite of legal equality with Europeans had turned into a proposed system of the graduated allocation of rights and privileges, one based on the developmental level of different sections of the Congolese population.

But the extension of the reform project from the elite to the larger group of the so-called detribalized by no means settled which criteria ought to underpin the classification of this group or what legal status the various groups ought to be granted. Despite many years of discussion, the press of the Belgian Congo had also failed to produce more precise ideas about who ought to be regarded as an *évolué* and based on which criteria.

Reform gridlock: expert commissions and the *évolués* problem

In 1945, the debate on reform took place chiefly within the colonial public sphere, where it caused ructions. But during the next two years it was expert commissions that shaped its evolution. The Colonial Ministry tasked several actors at once with resolving the *évolués* question. At the behest of the General Government, the AIMO continued to develop the idea of a graduated legal status. The governor of Léopoldville province, meanwhile, established a special commission to draw up a "status for the *évolués*." The *Congrès National Colonial*,

77 A. Scohy, "Un ordre du mérite civique et professionnel," *Croix du Congo* (1 October 1945).
78 Ibid.
79 A.-R. Bolamba, "La politique indigène d'après guerre," *Voix du Congolais* no. 8 (March-April 1946): 298.
80 Ibid.

which had been convened in Brussels, combined their schemes. This was an institution constituted by the Belgian government every five years in order to discuss thorny problems in colonial policy. Consonant with the topic at issue, the *Congrès National Colonial* took the form of a commission of experts, drawn from the chambers of the legislature, the Colonial Ministry, the colonial administration and various interest groups.[81] The "problem of the development of the colonized population" was now high on this commission's agenda.[82]

At a time when feelings were running high within the Belgian Congo's colonial public sphere, the six members of the *Congrès National Colonial* examined the "*évolués* problem" in fulsome detail.[83] Before presenting their findings in Brussels in May 1947, they had studied the proposals put forward by various actors within the colonial public sphere, comparing the schemes drawn up by the commissions in Léopoldville as well as revisiting the reform proposals on immatriculation produced during the inter-war period.

The Belgian government had appointed experts on the *évolué*s issue to the commission. Pierre Piron, deputy royal prosecutor in the Belgian Congo and a jurist with a doctorate in Law from the Catholic University of Leuven, had advised the AIMO on legal issues since 1942 and had worked intensively on the issue of immatriculation.[84] Joseph Van Riel, a specialist in tropical medicine and member of the *Conseil de Gouvernement* in Léopoldville, spoke on behalf of the CPPI, the interest group representing the Congolese population that had been consulted on immatriculation issues since the 1930s.[85] On behalf of the *Conseil Colonial*, the Colonial Ministry's advisory body appointed by parliament, missionary Joseph Van Wing also participated in the commission. After 30 years working at the Jesuit mission schools of the Belgian Congo, shortly before the bishops there had dispatched him to Brussels to do his best to influence colonial policy. As an "indigenist," Van Wing called for the preservation of Bakongo cul-

81 On the institution of the *Congrès National Colonial*, see B. Kambayi, *Blancs et noirs face à la décolonisation du Congo belge* (Kinshasa: Presses universitaires du Zaïre, 1992), 20 – 23. The influence of expert knowledge on the politics of Europe's African colonies increased greatly after 1945. For a ground-breaking account, see F. Cooper and R. M. Packard, "Introduction," in *International Development and the Social Sciences. Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, eds. F. Cooper and R. M. Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

82 Congrès Colonial National, *Les évolués, VIII. Commission* (Brussels: 1947), 2.

83 Ibid.

84 Rubbens, "Pierre Piron." His studies include P. Piron, "La réforme de l'immatriculation," *La Revue coloniale belge* 33 (1947); P. Piron, "L'évolution des populations détribalisés," in *Les évolués*, VIII. Commission, ed. Congrès Colonial National (Brussels: 1947).

85 See I. Beghin, "Joseph Van Riel," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 9, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 2015).

ture. Concerned about the lifestyle of the graduates of the advanced mission schools, however, he also expressed support for the policy of assimilation and made the case for university-level institutions.[86] Jean-Paul Quix was dispatched by the General Government in Léopoldville. While he had given up his role as patron of the *Voix du Congolais* in the summer of 1946 due to illness, he was closely familiar with the discussions unfolding among the elite. Quix played a leading role in developing the idea of a graduated "order of merit," as presented by the AIMO in October 1945.[87] Also on the commission was Julien Van Hove, a political scientist who had worked at the Colonial Ministry for 15 years and was now a ministerial adviser, as well as professor at the Colonial University in Antwerp. The sixth member was Constant Wauters, who had overseen the segregation of the European and African quarters of a rapidly growing Léopoldville in the 1920s. In 1940, he ended his long career as an official in the Belgian Congo as governor of the province of Lusambo, before finally being made honorary governor.[88]

The *Congrès National Colonial* was made up of individuals who were close to the colonial state and signalled the Belgian government's desire to reform the colonial population's legal status. For the commission members had previously expressed public support for concessions to the *évolués*. On the other hand, despite all its developmental rhetoric, the expert commission symbolizes the continuity of a paternalistic colonial policy that failed to consult either Congolese or European representatives of the colonial public sphere. After 1945, Colonial Ministry officials continued to work on the assumption that Brussels was best placed to assess what was in the best interest of the Belgian Congo.

How did the commission members envisage the new social order? First of all, they proceeded on the commonly held assumption of a colonial society subject to profound social and cultural transformation.[89] In the preceding decades, they believed, urbanization and proletarianization had created new needs and lived realities among the population. To evaluate these processes of transformation, in addition to their own publications the experts based themselves chiefly on scholarly findings on the development of colonized societies. From the tiered model produced by French anthropologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl they derived an urgent need for a new colonial policy. Levy-Bruhl defined three stages in the re-

86 Denis, "Van Wing."

87 Piron, "L'évolution," 58.

88 On Wauters's career, see M. A. Crèvecoeur, *Journal d'un commis de l'État au Congo belge: D'après les mémoires de Marc-Armand Crèvecoeur* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011), 82.

89 The following paragraphs are informed by the commission's report: Congrès Colonial National, *Les évolués*, 2–7.

sponse of African societies to the colonial encounter with an alien culture. During the first stage the colonized accepted the consolidation of European hegemony more or less willingly. During the second stage they accepted the colonizers' superiority and enthusiastically embraced their model of civilization, while rejecting traditional values perceived as inferior. Once the colonized had become familiar with the pros and cons of civilization, the third stage saw a return to the traditional culture, a shift that might lead to conflict and was often accompanied by nationalistic tendencies. The commission considered the *évolués* of the Belgian Congo to be at the stage of willingly adopting European lifestyles. They thus advocated using this "point in time, which is highly favourable to the colonizer" to support the *évolué*s in their developmental efforts.

The commission members, then, agreed that the Colonial Ministry must act, but just what it ought to do caused them quite a headache. One reason for this was a crucial question that had proved impossible to answer despite decades of debates, a question the commission now had to grapple with as well: who exactly was to be designated an *évolué?*

In order to describe the ongoing development of the Congolese population in a more conceptually apt way, the experts first agreed to use the umbrella term *évoluants*, the "developing." They supposed those within this group to be at differing stages along the path to cultural convergence with Europeans. The experts committed themselves to a graduated model, with which they intended to arrange the various developmental stages within society in proper order. Thus, rather than assuming the existence of *évolués* as such, that is, a homogenous intermediary class between Congolese and Europeans, the commission added complexity to this social category through several internal distinctions. Their typology consisted of three categories of *évoluants*, each of which entailed a number of subdivisions. The first category, which emphasized the contrast between village and urban lifeworlds, encompassed two sets of people: a small group of mission school graduates, who lived in their traditional milieu, and a second, larger group, whose lives were focused outside the village society in which they had grown up, in the *centre extra-coutumier* (CEC). The second category comprised the inhabitants of urban settlements, who were in turn divided into the "detribalized," who had broken with traditions, and the *évolués*, who differed from the detribalized in their greater degree of education (in terms of both character and vocation), a higher standard of living, European attire, exclusive use of the French language and living conditions comparable with those of Europeans. Even this group of *évolués* was further subdivided to underline the outstanding position of the "elite" employed as office assistants in the administrative system. A third and final category was the "assimilated." Due to their intellectual and moral qualities, they occupied an "honorary position within an exclusively Euro-

pean milieu"; the commission saw this group as consisting mainly of the small number of Congolese priests.

The commission was aware that the *évoluants* made up a fairly small part of the roughly eleven million people in the Belgian Congo. The "detribalized" referred to a few hundred thousand wage labourers in the cities.[90] The number of the better educated *évolués*, who were frequently referred to as the "African elite," meanwhile, was estimated by one commission member to be no more than 40,000.[91] The experts, however, were less interested in the present than in the future. They were convinced that the number of *évolués* would grow rapidly as a result of the expansion of schools and increasing urbanization. The semantics of progress evident in the commission's report recognized just one goal that Congolese were, more or less inevitably, striving to attain: gradual ascent of the developmental ladder towards cultural assimilation. In light of this prognosis, the commission members by no means regarded *évolué* status as a marginal topic. For them, the development of Congolese society was "at present, the core colonial problem."[92] What were the commission's recommended reforms? Given its attempts to differentiate within the category of *évoluants*, it is hardly surprising that it came out in favour of a graduated form of legal status. Ideally, the reform of status ought to take account of the development of Congolese as individuals, granting them specific legal privileges on this basis. The scheme presented by the commission was based on the preliminary work done by member Pierre Piron, who had come up with a tiered model of this kind for the General Government. Taking the three categories of *évoluants* as the starting point, rights and privileges were to be granted gradually through a multilevel form of legal status.[93] The lowest level of status was envisaged for the category of the "detribalized"; as a "black proletariat" they were to be allowed to settle permanently in the cities rather than having to return to their villages. The mid-level status was aimed at the category of *évolués*, who Piron also called the "indigenous bourgeoisie" and who were to be granted privileges under civil and penal law. All those who had proved themselves for five years at the *évolué* level were to be automatically elevated to the status of "person of honour" and thus granted more extensive rights and privileges. As the criteria for gaining the status of *évolué* and "person of honour," Piron identified an education above primary level, monogamous marital relations, professional experience, an absence of criminal convic-

90 On the estimates, see "Un ordre mérite Civique," *Croix du Congo* (7 October 1945).
91 J. Van Wing, "La formation," 9.
92 Congrès Colonial National, *Les évolués*, 13.
93 On the following section, including the quotations, see Piron, "L'évolution," 58 – 71.

tions and the passing of a "maturity test" before a selection panel. The highest level of this status model would guarantee full legal equality with Europeans, making those enjoying this distinction members of "civilized society." This level was intended for the category of the "assimilated,"[94] who were subsequently to assert their position within European society. Those applying for this assimilated status were to be subjected to a particularly strict selection process, through which Piron hoped to gain acceptance among the European population for the contentious process of legal and social equalization. As Piron saw it, in his intellect and morals the assimilated individual must in fact be superior to the "average European": "A gentleman that one can invite to dinner and whose skin colour passes out of mind the moment one hears him speak."[95]

The jurist Piron expected this tiered model to facilitate a new *modus vivendi* with respect to the unequal allocation of rights. The "discrimination by skin colour" practiced hitherto was to be replaced by a form of "discrimination based on developmental levels."[96] "This is the only legally justified form of discrimination,"[97] Piron concluded. If there was to be inequality of legal status – as we might express the commission's proposal to the colonial government in somewhat stark terms – it should at least be allocated fairly.

Inspired by Piron's tiered model, the commission submitted its practical recommendations to the Colonial Ministry. First, the experts suggested to the policymakers that they should rapidly introduce an "*évolué* status" that "enables the blacks in this category, particularly from a social standpoint, to avoid being mistaken for natives subject to the traditional order, but without putting them on the same footing as the European immigrants."[98]

This "*évolué* status" was thus conceived as a legal category between Europeans and Africans, intended for all the "detribalized" who fulfilled several criteria, including monogamy, no criminal record and the ability to "demonstrate their maturity."[99] Second, the commission's report proposed a reform of immatriculation for those colonial subjects considered "more developed" due to their education and way of life. But the final statement said nothing about the idea, propagated by the jurist Piron, of granting those "assimilated" persons who

94 Piron, "Le problème des assimilés," in Congrès Colonial National, *Les évolués*, 15.
95 Ibid., 21.
96 Piron, "L'évolution," 67.
97 Ibid.
98 Congrès Colonial National, *Les évolués*, 9.
99 Piron, "L'évolution," 62.

moved exclusively within the European milieu[100] full legal equality with Europeans.[101] Piron himself had in fact regarded a reform of this kind as a task for the future: as yet no-one embodied his ideal notion of the assimilated.[102]

Thus, on the one hand the expert commission urged the Colonial Ministry to swiftly introduce an "*évolué* status" that would extend to the large group of the "detribalized."[103] But the commission took the view that the time had not yet come for the legal assimilation of some Congolese.[104] Because this issue remained contentious even among the commission members, the colonial minister contented himself with convening another commission, which was, in the near future, to devote itself exclusively to the "status of the civilized Congolese population."[105]

For two years, various commissions and groups of experts in Léopoldville and Brussels had toiled away at proposals in which they defined different social categories, referring at times to *évolués*, at times to *évoluants*, at others to the elite, the detribalized and the assimilated. The fact that colonial subjects were to be classified through developmental levels already signalled a profound shift in the premises of Belgium's colonial policy, which had previously been dominated by the idea of the uniform development of Congolese society. This venerable ordering principle of "gradual development"[106] was challenged by the *évolués*. The proposed reforms, however, faced resistance at an early stage from some colonial officials and European spokesmen in the Belgian Congo. At the same time as the commission in Brussels was discussing the various reform proposals, the General Government in Léopoldville had gained a sense of the spectrum of opinion in the colony's provinces. Thus, the schemes for status reform debated in Brussels, as drawn up by the AIMO and the commission initiated by the province of Léopoldville, were also submitted to each *Conseil de Province* for debate.[107] These were advisory bodies at the provincial level convened once a year, in which, since 1945, in addition to colonial officials, repre-

100 P. Piron, "Le problème des assimilés," in Les évolués, VIII. Commission, ed. Congrès Colonial National, (Brussels: 1947), 22.
101 Piron, "L'évolution," 67.
102 Piron, "Le problème," 22.
103 Congrès Colonial National, *Les évolués*, 9.
104 Ibid., 11.
105 Letter from Van Hove to the colonial minister, 10 February 1948, AA/AI/4743//III/T/4.
106 See Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 105.
107 AIMO report on the provincial councils' position on the status schemes, 24 January 1947, AA/AI/4743/III/T/4.

sentatives of European interest groups also sat for the first time.[108] Their response to the various schemes for status reform was negative. For some, the many criteria intended to define the beneficiaries seemed too vague, while others were unhappy with the "excessively complicated"[109] character of the graduated legal status. Other contributions made the same arguments put forward in the European media against an *évolué* status, such as the fear of splitting the *évolués* off from Congolese society.[110]

By early 1947, then, the negative opinions in the provinces had shown the General Government that status reform would be viewed with scepticism and concern throughout the colony. The Brussels commission's temporary retreat from full legal equalization may have been partly due to this negative response from the colony. Nonetheless, an impatient vernacular elite continued to demand concrete political results.

Media interventions: propaganda for status reform

How did the *Voix du Congolais* react to the ongoing discussion and to the first instances of resistance to status reform within the European milieu? The newspaper intervened in the debate, dominated by European expert commissions, colonial officials and opinion leaders, in a range of ways. First, the Congolese authors took issue with the views of those opposed to reform. In their articles they tried to show that the *évolués* were already sufficiently developed. Second, the *Voix du Congolais* intervened in the convoluted debate through articles that articulated the authors' anger at the reform deadlock. These authors provided the European supporters of status reform with arguments backing their view that the colonial government must match words with actions. But they did not discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various proposed schemes for status reform. Instead, they focussed on achieving progress, of any kind, at the level of implementation. The third medial intervention by the *Voix du Congolais* thus consisted in advocating the compromise status reform developed by the General Government's AIMO department, to which the newspaper enjoyed close institutional links.

108 On the development of the councils in the various colonial administrative units, see Brausch, *Belgian Administration*, 47.

109 AIMO report on the provincial councils' position on the status schemes, 24 January 1947, AA/AI/4743/III/T/4.

110 Ibid.

The editorials informed readers about the state of the debate and the various stages of *évolué* status, while the correspondents published articles dedicated to the *évolués*' collective characteristics, seeking to oppose the arguments put forward by the opponents of reform. Conspicuously, however, it was not just Belgian experts who assumed the ongoing, sometimes inadequate development of the *évolués*, but also the Congolese authors themselves. They, however, seemed convinced of the perfectibility of the individual character and concomitant habits. That legal equality required cultural equality was a commonplace within the colonial public sphere, one that both the supporters and opponents of status reform could agree on.

Yet it was in articles by Congolese authors that the emancipatory force of this idea of individual development was unleashed. As if they wanted to counter the claim emanating from the European milieu that the *évolué*s lacked the civilizational maturity for legal equality, the authors emphasized the very qualities described as civilized conduct within colonial discourse.[111] Certainly, in their rhetoric, these writers were moving towards a gradual and individually advanced form of assimilation and thus took up the place within the social order granted to them within colonial discourse. From this narrative vantage point, however, they put legitimate demands to the colonial government. As *évolués* they called for a status consonant with their individual feats of development.[112] During a time of contentious debates on *évolué* status, the authors thus sought to advance their own interests. In their highly articulate and extremely polite articles they sought to show that there were already Congolese who had internalized those qualities considered civilized and had thus earned a separate status.

In an editorial of July 1947, editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba made the case for a "special card." In contrast to a classificatory system featuring a number of sub-categories, as envisaged by several commissions, a hierarchical approach that Bolamba believed would stoke dissatisfaction, he espoused a "flexible and more practical method."[113] Ultimately, then, Bolamba was advocating the reform devised by the AIMO, with Jean-Marie Domont, also the newspaper's

111 Exemplary of this line of argument is an article series by Lomami-Tshibamba on the "four disciplines of the *évolués*," namely "familial discipline," "professional discipline," "social discipline" and "spiritual discipline"; P. Lomami-Tshibamba, "Les devoirs des évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 4 (July-August 1945).

112 Lomami-Tshibamba, "Quelle sera notre place," 47–51.

113 A.-R. Bolamba, "Le problème des Évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 16 (July 1947).

patron, leading the way here.[114] The plan for a "special distinction" departed from a graduated form of legal status and instead embraced the idea of a "card" already put forward by the AIMO in 1945.[115] As Bolamba saw it, this card ought to grant a large target group a small number of privileges, such as exemption from flogging and improved conditions of travel.[116]

That the *Voix du Congolais* advocated the compromise solution was a matter of both politics and strategy. The various status reform projects, as developed by the expert commissions, were soon supposed to be submitted to the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. In light of the hostile reaction from the provincial councils consulted earlier, there was a risk that the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, which had been augmented with representatives of European interests in the spirit of the postwar reforms, would also find none of the schemes to its liking.[117] In order to avert the risk of presenting the vernacular elite with nothing at all after so many years of negotiation, the AIMO pushed the idea of a "special card," using the *Voix du Congolais* to propagate this compromise solution.

Immediately before the *Conseil de Gouvernement* met, the newspaper addressed itself to its members. In an editorial, Bolamba urged this body to finally make a decision after years of debate on status reform: "The long wait has exhausted the patience of the native elite. [...] The elites thought they had been deceived and that the status they had spent so much time discussing would never see the light of day."[118] Bolamba elucidated the advantages of the "special card" over the other proposed reforms and commended this solution as reflecting the wishes of the "*évoluants* class": "As the *évolués* see it, the complicated system of hierarchies and transitional stages ought to be scrapped. [...] From our point of view, it would be better to come up with a simplified method such as issuing a special card to all applicants, to the extent that this is justified by their development."[119]

The AIMO made use of the *Voix du Congolais* as the voice of the *évolués* in other ways as well in order to push the card as a route out of the muddled status reform project. When Christian Social colonial minister Pierre Wigny, who had

114 This is evident in a report published in a subsequent issue; A.-R. Bolamba, "Monsieur Pierre Wigny, Ministre des Colonies de Belgique accorde un entretien à une délégation des Évolués de Léopoldville," *Voix du Congolais* no. 18 (September 1947).

115 *Croix du Congo* (1 October 1945).

116 Bolamba, "Le problème des évolués," 685.

117 The *Voix du Congolais* had already highlighted this state of affairs; Bolamba, "La politique indigène," 300.

118 A.-R. Bolamba, "Le Statut des Évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 19 (October 1947): 801.

119 Ibid.

taken office in the spring of 1947, was staying in Léopoldville two months before the sitting of the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, the head of the AIMO, Gustave Sand, arranged a meeting with Antoine-Roger Bolamba and two other authors working for the *Voix du Congolais*. "In conversation with the minister, the delegates insisted on the need for a way of distinguishing the *évolués* other than the status they had been promised,"[120] as the journal reported on the meeting. In the name of the *évolués*, the three authors asked the minister to introduce a "special pass" as rapidly as possible.[121] Finally, as a consequence of this concord, as staged in the media, between the colonial minister, as the highest representative of the Belgian colonial state, and the Congolese authors, an AIMO staff member also submitted the proposal for a card to the *Conseil de Gouvernement*.

When the latter convened in early November 1947 for its first session since the end of the war, the colonial administrators had some new colleagues to contend with. For the first time, the General Government had appointed representatives of the labourers, firms, settlers' associations and the justice system, in order to give the European colonial population a greater say.[122] Precisely because the post-war reforms had not allowed for political participation, despite its purely consultative role the *Conseil de Gouvernement* developed into the most important forum for European interest groups. Behind the scenes, the nomination process was influenced by settlers' associations, chambers of commerce and business associations as a means of pressing the colonial government to make decisions in their interest.[123]

At the beginning of the session, AIMO head Sand presented the compromise solution of an "*évolué* card," as previously propagated in the *Voix du Congolais*. He reminded those present of the "importance the *évolués* attach to this issue" and warned of the bitterness they would feel, as well as the potential for their radicalization, were the reform to fail. He sought to persuade those present that card-holders would enjoy just a few advantages: "We merely wish to send out a signal of recognition, which will cost us little."[124] That he failed to gain enough support for this approach was chiefly due to the presence, among the new members of the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, of the most prominent critic of

120 Bolamba, "Monsieur Pierre Wigny," 767. This first-ever meeting between the colonial minister and *évolués* made a major splash in the media, for example in the *Croix du Congo* of 27 September 1947.

121 Bolamba, "Monsieur Pierre Wigny," 767.

122 On its composition, see *Croix du Congo* (23 November 1947).

123 Young, *Politics*, 28 – 30.

124 Minutes of the meeting of the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, 4 November 1947, AA/AI/4743/III/T/4.

an *évolué* status: the lawyer Antoine Rubbens. Unsurprisingly, he rejected status reform on principle, highlighting the risk of hiving the educated elite off from the rest of the population. Rubbens, who had travelled from Elisabethville, discerned in *évolué* status a project spawned by officials of the General Government, who chiefly had in mind the educated Congolese of Léopoldville, while ignoring opinion in the provinces, particularly the views of the CEPSI research centre in Katanga.[125] Rubbens demanded that the privileges reserved for a small elite be granted to the entire population.[126] He may well have had the recent abolition of the *indigénat* in the French empire in the back of his mind. The governors in attendance from those provinces whose advisory bodies had already put forward their objections to the reform endorsed Rubbens's views. The only Congolese representative, Stéphane Kaoze, also rejected the proposed new status.[127] Kaoze, the first Congolese ordained as a priest in 1917, was the head of a Scheut seminary and had achieved a certain renown, not least after he was granted an audience with King Albert in Brussels. As a member of the CPPI he expressed the view that Europeans ought to treat Congolese in accordance with their developmental level. He was indignant about the fact that, during journeys by boat on Lake Tanganyika, he had had to sit apart from the European members of his order in an intermediate class for Asians.[128] It is no coincidence that this Catholic priest sympathized with Rubbens's view that it was crucial not to pry the elite apart from Congolese society by granting them a special status: according to the Scheut missionaries, the *évolués*' primary task was still to evangelize their fellows.

Despite the strong push for the compromise solution, the *Conseil de Gouvernement* rejected the proposal. While the Colonial Ministry held the power of decision, Brussels hesitated to bypass the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. Its reform was, after all, intended to embody the colonial society's new opportunities for

125 Members of the CEPSI, including Antoine Rubbens, put forward these arguments in an assessment of *évolué* status: special session of the CEPSI, 6 August 1948, AA/AI/4743/III/T/4.

126 Minutes of the meeting of the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, 4 November 1947, AA/AI/4743/III/T/4.

127 Kaoze is the author of the first literary text written in French by a Congolese, the "Psychologie des Bantu" published in 1910. On his biography, see Bolamba and Cassiau-Haurie, *Carnets de voyage*, 16; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 68; M. Quaghebeur, "Des textes sous le boisseau," in *Papier blanc, encre noire. Cent ans de culture francophone en Afrique centrale (Zaïre, Rwanda, Burundi)*, eds. M. Quaghebeur and E. Balberghe (Brussels: Labor, 1992).

128 For biographical information on Kaoze, see J. M. Jadot, "Stephane Kaoze," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer,* vol. 6, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1968).

political participation. The much-vaunted status reform thus teetered on the brink.

The response to this decision in the next issue of the *Voix du Congolais* was unusually brusque. This was evident first in a visual sense. The artwork normally entwined around the first letters of an editorial, typically featuring symbols with no direct connection with the text, such as a chessboard or animals of various kinds, instead showed a goateed figure in a flat cap with his fist in the air, clearly a representation of Vladimir Lenin.[129] As yet communism, regarded in Western Europe as a worldwide danger, had received no mention at all in the elite newspaper and his portrait would surely ring no bells with many Congolese readers. It thus seems likely that this imagery was aimed chiefly at European readers and intended to play to their fears of a communist influence on disaffected *évolués*. Since Christian Social politician Pierre Wigny – whose party espoused an explicitly anti-communist stance – had been made colonial minister, the latent fear of a communist infiltration of the Belgium Congo had increased.[130] In common with every other European colonial power, Belgium saw in educated Africans potential communist sympathizers.[131] But the Belgian colonial minister was focused more on prevention than repression. He took the view that the "only effective means of combating" this risk were welfarist programmes intended to improve living conditions along with "moral measures through education, guidance and above all evangelization."[132] The figure of Lenin was a veiled but impressive reminder that satisfying the Congolese elite was in part intended to avert the spread of communism, as emphasized, among others, by European supporters of *évolué* status in the *Essor du Congo*. In line with this, in his editorial editor-in-chief Bolamba accused the *Conseil de Gouvernement* of having made a disastrous "political error."[133] Its negative stance, he contended, had disappointed the "native elite" and nullified three years of work on the various draft schemes. Bolamba countered the rationale put forward by the council members, that rejecting the card was an attempt to prevent the emergence of a caste, by pointing out that the *Conseil de Gouvernement*'s negative stance had just created one: a "caste

129 The image appeared in A.-R. Bolamba, "Erreur politique?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 21 (December 1947). I was made aware of this by a handwritten note in the papers of Belgian historian Benoît Verhaegen. He remarked: "*Portrait de Lenin! Symbole!*"

130 In spring 1947, the General Government instructed all administrative agencies to keep an eye on the prophetic sects, which were viewed with suspicion and had been considered receptive to communist propaganda since the 1920s. See Gijs, *Le pouvoir*, 161.

131 For Portuguese and French examples of this perspective, see Keese, *Living*, 99 – 101.

132 Note by the colonial minister, 16 July 1946, quoted in Gijs, *Le pouvoir*, 162.

133 Bolamba, "Erreur politique?," 894.

of the disaffected."[134] Finally, Bolamba pointed out that it was not just the *évolués* who were discontent but also external observers, an allusion to the United Nations, which was attentively following Belgium's implementation of colonial reforms: "We bitterly regret this decision, whose psychological consequences are keenly felt both within and beyond the Congo."[135]

This "political error" was headline news in the subsequent issues of the *Voix du Congolais*. From Luozi in the province of Bas-Congo, one prospective office worker reported that "this decision has left the *évolués* I am acquainted with in a state of misery."[136] The "special card" that the *Conseil de Gouvernement* had rejected, remarked one author from Léopoldville, would have been an incentive for the masses to follow the good example of those in possession of one and emulate their behaviour. The *Conseil*'s negative stance was thus an "unprecedented act of discouragement."[137] Co-author of the *évolués*' memorandum of 1944, Etienne Ngandu, also underlined the need for an "*évolué* card." A diligent contributor to the status debate, he sighed: "We are struggling to understand our patrons' current attitude towards the Congolese elite."[138] As the originator of the metaphor, Ngandu probably feared that he would be denied a seat even in the "waiting room" for an indefinite period of time.

The unequivocal views expressed in the *Voix du Congolais* regarding the muddled status debate should come as no surprise. The authors' demand for a so-called *évolué* card was of course backed by the General Government, which had tasked its own AIMO with drawing up the reform that had failed to sway the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. For the colonial government, the incensed authors were political allies who could help them get their compromise proposal through despite the resistance. We may assume that during this stage of negotiations on status reform the AIMO paid close attention to the content of the editorials and to the selection of published readers' letters advocating the "special card." With their calls for an *évolué* card, the *Voix du Congolais* and its authors thus remained on the same page as the General Government.

But we should also acknowledge the authors' self-interest. While the *Voix du Congolais* had been created to keep elite discourse within orderly channels and in the slipstream of the colonial government, the authors utilized this narrow room for manoeuvre to prevent their demands from being disregarded completely. The newspaper turned the *évolués* into a social fact, an elite interest group

134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 A. Kilembi, "Joie et tristesse," *Voix du Congolais* no. 23 (February 1948): 69.
137 G. Mahutama, "Pour la carte des Évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 25 (April 1948): 157.
138 Ngandu, "La carte d'évolué," 201.

that was concerned chiefly with advancing its own agenda. As advocates of civilized Congolese, they lent weight to the latter's demands – and furnished colonial policymakers with a reason to get on with the job.

Due to the dissension in the Belgian Congo regarding status reform, it was some time before the Colonial Ministry issued a statement. The *Conseil de Gouvernement*'s intransigence had, in addition to the authors contributing to the *Voix du Congolais*, brought advisors to the Colonial Ministry – members of the expert commissions in Brussels tasked with examining the *évolués* issue – into the debate. In late February 1948, the colonial minister received a letter from Julien Van Hove, director of the section of the Colonial Ministry known as *Affaire Indigène* (AI); as a member of the *Congrès National Colonial*, he had contributed to the various schemes for status reform.[139] "The *Conseil de Gouvernement*'s brusque dismissal cannot be the last word on the *évolués* question," he stated to the minister. Van Hove backed this up by referring to the phrase "political error" in the *Voix du Congolais*. As if the hint dropped by the Lenin artwork had had an effect, he interpreted the associated editorial as a harbinger of the emergence of a disaffected and anti-colonial elite. Through its decision, according to Van Hove, the *Conseil de Gouvernement* had opened the door to the "intensive pro-independence propaganda of the West African movements," which "is reaching us first and foremost from Nigeria, AEF [*Afrique-Équatoriale française* or French Equatorial Africa] and AOF [*Afrique-Occidentale française* or French West Africa]."

Van Hove referred explicitly to the neighbouring French colony of AEF, given that the "*évolués* in Léopoldville" had hoped to be granted a similar status to the one created for the "rank of the notables" in the French territory.[140] For while France, with reference to their low level of development, had still denied the inhabitants of AEF the option of naturalization in the inter-war period, in 1941 the French exile government resolved to introduce the *statut des notables évolués*. This occurred in part out of gratitude for the fact that, under Governor General Félix Éboué, AEF was the only colonial territory to refuse allegiance to the Vichy regime.[141] In line with the established naturalization policy in other French ter-

139 On the following section, see Letter from Van Hove to the Colonial Minister, 25 February 1948, AA/4743/II/T/4.

140 Ibid.

141 For a detailed account of the role of the central African territories in the French resistance, see E. Jennings, *La France libre fut africaine* (Paris: Perrin, 2014). For an instructive text on elite-making policy in AEF, see E. M'Bokolo, "Forces sociales et idéologies dans la décolonisation de L'A.E.F.," *Journal of African History* 22, no. 3 (1981). For a general take on elite-making policy in France's African colonies, see Keese, *Living*.

ritories, this status granted to a select group of applicants certain privileges and exemption from the *indigénat*.[142] The proximity of the two capital cities of the AEF and the Belgian Congo, which were separated only by the Congo River, was in fact crucial to the Belgian status reform. The elite-making policy on the French side of the river put Belgian colonial policy in a tight spot: "Our natives are quite aware of this and accuse us of inaction,"[143] remarked one member of the *Congrès National Colonial* with reference to the *statut des notables évolués*. The *Voix du Congolais* also compared the widely propagated proposal for a card explicitly with the *statut* in the neighbouring colony.[144] Further, it pointed to black Governor General Éboué, who was born in the French Caribbean, as a role model in light of his career.[145] On the occasion of his death it referred to him as the "greatest example of the civilized black."[146] What the eulogies issuing from Belgian officialdom consciously passed over, however, was the fact that by this point in time *évolué* status had become obsolete in AEF. By 1946, within the context of the drafting of a constitution for the Fourth Republic, representatives from the African and Caribbean colonies, who had been present in the French parliament since the immediate post-war period, had already managed to ensure that the *indigénat* and forced labour were abolished completely for all inhabitants of the colonies.[147] The law named after Senegalese delegate Lamine Guéye also granted them citizenship independent of civil law, so that "equality could be claimed without giving up difference."[148] The plodding debate on status reform in the Belgian Congo was thus taking place at a point in time when the Africans in the neighbouring colony of AEF were already enjoying their first political rights. The privileges and legal advantages so contested in the Belgian colony already applied to everyone there. From this vantage point, the legal reform in the Belgian Congo was taking its lead from a long abandoned conservative

142 On the genesis and drafting of the *statut des notables évolués*, see Politique indigène du Gouverneur Félix Éboué, 1941–1943, CAOM/GG/AEF/5D202; Politique indigène. Notables évolués, 1942–1947, CAOM/GG/AEF/5D206.

143 Piron, "L'évolution," 58.

144 Bolamba, "Le problème des évolués," 687; A.-R. Bolamba, "La position sociale des évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 29 (August 1948): 321.

145 The elimination of the *indigénat* is said to have been a personal matter for Éboué as governor general of AEF. As a young man he had worn a pith helmet to ensure that Europeans did not mistake him for a "native" at the mercy of an arbitrary colonial law. See P. M. Martin, "Contesting, Clothes in Colonial Brazzaville," *Journal of African History* 35, no. 3 (1994): 413.

146 A.-R. Bolamba, "Souvenirs d'un grand chef," *Voix du Congolais* no. 14 (March-April 1947): 605.

147 See Cooper, *Citizenship*, 66–67.

148 Cooper, *Colonialism*, 216.

elite-making policy in the neighbouring French colony. If Brazzaville and Léopoldville were "mirror cities,"[149] then what was being mirrored in the Belgian Congo of tomorrow was the French Congo of yesterday. The *évolués* had merely to cross the river to admire a progressive elite-making policy. This is one of the reasons why the Colonial Ministry was so concerned when they learned that *évolués* from Léopoldville had met in Brazzaville with Jean Félix-Tchicaya, one of the delegates from AEF in the French National Assembly.[150] Shortly before, Tchicaya's party, supported by clerks, had formed a parliamentary group with the French Communist Party, which had in turn established its first cells in Brazzaville.[151]

As his close adviser, Van Hove suggested to the colonial minister that he ought to introduce the "special identification card," as developed by the AIMO and championed in the *Voix du Congolais*, as rapidly as possible.[152] In attempting to convince him, however, Van Hove did not refer exclusively to the differing pace of reform in the neighbouring colony. He also dismissed the supposed danger of creating a caste as aired by the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. Van Hove explained to the colonial minister that the *Conseil* was "hostile" to every measure aimed at creating a group, yet the formation of elites was unavoidable, for "the introduction of European civilization throughout the colonial territory inevitably leads to the emergence of an elite."[153]

Another figure championing the *évolué* card to the colonial minister was jurist Antoine Sohier, who the minister had tasked with creating a commission in order to continue working on the shelved issue of immatriculation. The appointment of Antoine Sohier brings out the tremendous importance of the reform project to colonial policy. After 20 years working as a lawyer in Katanga, where he had also established law journals, Sohier was considered an outstanding expert on colonial law. Since his return to Belgium he had advised its supreme court and now dedicated himself to the question of elite status.[154] In a letter to the colonial minister, Sohier argued, in much the same way as Van Hove, against the opponents of reform on the *Conseil de Gouvernement:* "This class of *évolués* ex-

149 Ch. D. Gondola, *Villes miroirs. Migrations et identités urbaines à Kinshasa et Brazzaville, 1930 – 1970* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996).

150 Ibid.

151 F. Bernault, *Démocraties ambiguës en Afrique centrale: Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, 1940 – 1965* (Paris: Karthala, 1996).

152 Letter from Van Hove to the colonial minister, 25 February 1948, AA/4743/II/T/4.

153 Ibid.

154 On Sohier's career, see E. Lamy, "Antoine Sohier," *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer,* vol. 8, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1998).

ists: they cannot be got rid of by ignoring them."[155] In Sohier's description of the *évolués* as a group a trope resurfaced that had been shaped by the *Voix du Congolais:* "The key question is whether we want to foster a class of the disaffected." Well aware that the commission entrusted to him would have to deliberate for longer on the contested issue of legal equality, Sohier supported the "fundamentally provisional measure of the card." And not because of the legal privileges it granted, but because of its symbolic value: "In the interim it is crucial that we satisfy the *évolués*' *amour propre* and reassure them that we care about their concerns. This can be done by issuing a card with the small number of privileges it would currently grant."[156]

The letters to the colonial minister show that the champions of an *évolué* status quoted the *Voix du Congolais* as key witness and purveyor of their arguments. The official voice of the vernacular elite brought home to them the bitterness the members of this group felt about the rejection of the status reform and about the discrepancy with the policy in the neighbouring French colony. When it came to their political lobbying, the newspaper served them as an advocate for the Congolese that even the colonial minister could not fail to hear.

Carte du mérite civique: elite status as emergency decree

Ultimately, Colonial Minister Wigny decided to pursue a dual temporary solution, as his advisors suggested. First, he prompted the governor general to introduce the so-called *carte du mérite civique* on 12 July 1948.[157] This card was based on the proposal put forward by the AIMO, as publicly propagated by the *Voix du Congolais* and rejected by the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. Rather than legal equality, the *carte du mérite civique* merely provided for a small number of privileges to be granted gradually, but a broad range of people could apply for it. The minister regarded this as a "stop-gap solution."[158] In order to avoid the protracted process necessitated by an edict, the governor general issued an emergency de-

155 The following section refers to the letter from Antoine Sohier to the colonial minister, 18 June 1948, AA/4743/II/T/4.

156 Ibid.

157 *Ordonnance* N°21/258 AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948 créant une carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in *Voix du Congolais* no. 30 (September 1948): 363–367.

158 The minister already expressed a preference for a "stop-gap solution" on 10 March 1948, which he wanted to forego such controversial terms as "class," *évolués* and *évoluants* and instead adopt a title such as "carte du mérite civique"; correspondence between colonial minister and Van Hove, 10 March 1948, AA/4743/II/T/4.

cree, which did not require the assent of the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. The minister expected this decision to gain him some time in order to allow the commission headed by Antoine Sohier to resolve the highly contested question of legal equality and a "status for the civilized Congolese population."[159]

With this compromise solution, after a lengthy period of hesitation the Colonial Ministry enforced its will in the face of resistance in the colony. The need to grant the elite privileges of some kind had also been articulated vociferously in 1947 by a delegation of members of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives and Senate following a trip through the Belgian Congo.[160] That same year, moreover, during his trip to Léopoldville Prince Charles of Belgium had affirmed his country's determination to fulfil the obligations imposed by the UN charter.[161] But it was above all Colonial Minister Wigny who expressed his conviction as to the importance of the reform within the framework of his assimilation policy. As he wrote, it not only "placates" the "*évolué* class, which expects our support in its efforts to civilize," but also provided international observers with evidence of "Belgium's generous policy *vis-à-vis* the natives entrusted to us."[162] The politicians in Belgium, then, were less afraid of criticisms from the colonies than of those emanating from the international community. Any attempt to backtrack on elite-making policy would have lent impetus to criticisms made by the United Nations to the effect that the Belgian Congo was bedevilled by racial segregation and a regressive population policy in comparison to French and British Africa.

But how did the *Voix du Congolais* comment on the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique?* Bolamba was effusive in welcoming the minister's decision and sought to portray the newspaper as its originator:

> The *Voix du Congolais* can proudly claim to have been the initiator of the *Carte du mérite civique* and to have defended the efforts made to devise it in good times as well as bad. This newspaper is convinced that its many and loyal readers will never forget the role it has played in this matter.[163]

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159 De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 141. Copy of speech by Colonial Minister Pierre Wigny on the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique*. "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 28 (July 1948): 303 – 306.

160 On the Belgian Senate members' trip to the Congo, see Young, *Politics*, 77 – 78; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 48.

161 See ibid., 57.

162 Instruction from Colonial Minister Wigny to Governor General Jungers of 14 April 1948, quoted in Tshonda and Delaleeuwe, "Je veux la civilisation," 149 – 150.

163 A.-R. Bolamba, "Carte du mérite civique. Symbole de devoirs," *Voix du Congolais* no. 30 (September 1948): 362.

The Colonial Ministry was content to let the *Voix du Congolais* herald its first victory, not least in order to reinforce the newspaper's image as advocate of the *évolués*. But the elite only got the reform most recently extolled in the newspaper. The provincial councils having signalled their resistance, since spring 1947 the *Voix du Congolais* had committed its authors and readers to the "special card" introduced to the debate by the AIMO as a compromise solution. The advantages of such a card, as subsequently demanded in editorials, corresponded precisely to those later supposed to be granted by the *carte du mérite civique*.[164] From this perspective, the only elements the Congolese authors were allowed to push through were those the colonial government was minded to implement anyway. They were colonial reformers tied to their typewriters – at the colonial authorities' beck and call.

Nonetheless, Bolamba saw the *carte du mérite civique* as a means of "fundamentally changing our place in the Congo of tomorrow."[165] This explicit reference to the article published by Paul Lomami-Tshibamba in early 1945, however, masked the fact that after three years of discussion and commission work little remained of his demand for total assimilation. Against this background, the cherished image of victorious authors appears in a different light. The colonial minister had been unwilling to resolve the contested issue of the legal equality of certain Congolese, which was put on hold through the formation of a new expert commission. The leading politicians with responsibility for colonial policy continued to be lulled by a false sense of security, believing there was still plenty of time for this reform.

The *carte du mérite civique* and the establishment of a new commission, then, must be understood as delaying tactics. The much-vaunted reforms to elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo after 1945 were half-hearted when it came to their implementation. The authorities did not justify this interim solution with reference to protests within the European milieu, the unclear findings of the expert commissions, or politicians' reluctance to put the colonial order at risk through a far-reaching legal reform. Instead, the official rationale was still that the *évolués* were simply not advanced enough for legal equality. The preamble to the *carte du mérite civique* thus legitimized the absence of legal assimilation with the well-worn argument that the "state of development reached by the majority of natives in the intellectual and moral spheres does not yet allow for their assimilation."[166]

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164 See for example the following article: Bolamba, "Le problème des évolués," 684–687.

165 Bolamba, "Carte du mérite," 362.

166 *Ordonnance* N°21/258 AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948 créant une carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in *Voix du Congolais* no. 30 (September 1948): 363.

The introduction of the *carte du mérite civique* in 1948 marked the first tentative step towards a new legal status for the vernacular elite in the Belgian Congo. Within the Belgian empire, however, the institutional inequality between metropole and colony was further exacerbated. That same year, the introduction of female suffrage in Belgium constituted a further shift away from systematic discrimination when it came to civil rights, a move that was long overdue in comparative European perspective.[167] But those living in the Congo, even the Belgians resident there, were excluded from this "core political right of citizenship."[168] Moreover, as a result of the protracted debate on legal assimilation, Belgian colonial policy created a new form of inequality between the colonial territories in Africa, arising from differing post-war reforms. While Africans in the AEF, which bordered directly on the Belgian Congo, became citizens of the *Union Française*, in the Belgian colony they remained politically emasculated subjects, who were to be dealt with according to the *indigénat*. Apart from Belgium, Portugal was the only country to retain a dualistic legal system that institutionalized discrimination in its African colonies, including neighbouring Angola.[169] Much like the *évolués*, only the *assimilados* could hope to gain an improved legal status, on an individual basis, by demonstrating their civilizational maturity.[170] The refusal to grant rights of political participation of any kind to their colonial subjects was another feature common to Belgian and Portuguese post-war policy in Africa. Yet under António de Oliveira Salazar there was no suffrage either in Portugal or its colonies, whereas in the Belgian case a democratized metropole contrasted with a depoliticized and disenfranchised colony. Though the Belgian Congo benefited from far more extensive welfarist measures and had a more developed educational and health system after 1945

167 Female suffrage was introduced in Great Britain in 1928 and in France in 1944.

168 Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 643.

169 On elite-making policy in Angola and Mozambique, see Keese, *Living*. On the post-war reforms in Portuguese colonial policy, see Albertini, *Dekolonisation*, 586 – 596; M. Bandeira Jéronimo and A. Costa Pinto, "A Modernising Empire? Politics, Culture, and Economy in Portuguese Late Colonialism," in *The Ends of European Colonial Empires. Cases and Comparisons*, eds. M. Bandeira Jéronimo and A. Costa Pinto (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

170 The Salazar regime introduced *assimilado* status in 1930, which premised legal equality with Portuguese in the metropole on cultural adaptation. On the development of *assimilado* status, see G. J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 149 – 150; Keese, *Living*, 241 – 242; D. Morton, "From Racial Discrimination to Class Segregation in Postcolonial Urban Mozambique," in *Geographies of Privilege*, eds. F.W. Twine and B. Gardner (New York: Routledge, 2013).

than the Portuguese colonies,[171] this proximity to Portugal's "repressive developmentalism" when it came to elite-making policy[172] laid bare the increasingly anachronistic character of Belgian colonial rule.

171 Only from 1961 onwards were primary schools and medical facilities expanded in Portuguese Africa; ibid., 153.

172 On Portugal's repressive developmentalism, see Bandeira Jéronimo and Costa Pinto, "A Modernising Empire?," 56 – 60.

"Perfected Blacks" and malcontents (1945 – 1952)

Cultural tropes and discourses of elite self-affirmation

If opinions differed on how far special legal treatment for the Congolese elite ought to go, opinion leaders in the colonial public sphere agreed that the existing generation of *évolués* were distinguished above all else by their inadequacies. The *évolués'* defining feature was their pursuit of perfectibility – and thus the assumption that they were imperfect. A prominent example of this way of thinking are the aforementioned articles on post-war elite formation published in the *Essor du Congo* in 1944 and 1945. Both supporters and opponents of a special *évolué* status accused most members of the elite of vanity, pretentiousness, pomposity and hypocrisy – they were educated, certainly, but morally stunted.[1] These authors saw it as a major problem that the *évolués* had been uprooted from their original milieu and had yet to find a secure foothold in their new environment. European commentators bewailed the fact that, in their behaviour towards the *indigènes*, what they generally showed was contempt rather than a sense of responsibility for their development.[2] The prevailing view was that the *évolués*, as unfinished business of the civilizing mission, required yet more guidance and tutoring from Europeans: "The *évolué* is an unfinished product; he must be honed and perfected."[3]

These statements reflect the ambivalence of the colonial discourse on the *évolués:* on the one hand they were viewed as deficient beings, but on the other they represented the potential model of the civilized Congolese, one that was supposed to aid the development of the population as a whole. In this reading of society, the antithesis of the civilizational elite was the majority of ignorant *indigènes*. But because the "developmental role model" had to be created before it could function as social template, European journalists were unanimous in calling for the expansion of the *évolués*' moral education beyond the mission schools.

As we have seen, in the debate on status reform both European experts and Congolese authors continued to wrestle with the definition of the term *évolués*. This social category was contentious and highly malleable – both horizontally

1 Rubbens, "Le problème des évolués," *Essor du Congo* (18 October 1944), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 113 – 117.

2 Ibid.

3 L. Ballegeer, "Le rôle social des évolués," *Essor du Congo* (5 May 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 138.

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and vertically. Because it assumed several levels of development, the term *évolués* represented a vertical concept of social classification: some found themselves at a higher level than others; one could move up and back down again.[4] The term thus codified the unfinished, processual nature of colonial subject-making. It stabilized semantically the hierarchy within the colony's social order, with the European colonial master at the top of the developmental ladder, a figure African subjects literally looked up to. At the same time, *évolués* was a horizontal concept encompassing a heterogenous social group, whose members were integrated into the structures of the colonial state and fit the supposed group characteristics to varying degrees. It was thus unclear what the attributes of a "true" *évolué* were.

Manners books, published by several authors in the Belgian Congo's missionary and colonial state milieu, promised to provide guidance on a desirable lifestyle and were aimed at the aspiring *évolué*. May 1945 saw the publication of *L'Évolué* by Jean Coméliau. As head of a Jesuit mission station in Leverville, the centre of the palm oil industry, he had founded the *Bibliothèque des évolués* shortly before in an attempt to ensure that educated Congolese in a rural setting had access to books.[5] In forty-six pages, Coméliau informed the reader of what constituted exemplary conduct and what distinguished the "false *évolué*" from the "real *évolué*."[6] The brochure invited the reader to place himself on a point scale with the help of three differently weighted criteria. One's level of educational attainment and salary could garner up to twenty-five points each, while "morality"[7] was worth up to fifty points. Even more clearly than in the case of Antoine-Roger Bolamba's definition of *évolués* in the *Voix du Congolais*, Coméliau believed he could derive a person's level of civilizational development from a rigorous evaluation of his moral conduct,[8] "the solid ground on which every edifice of development must be built."[9] Unsurprisingly, what the missionary Coméliau meant by this first and foremost was the Christian religion, one's "inner

4 My thanks to Frederick Cooper for alerting me to the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the *évolué* concept.

5 On the history of this institution, renamed the *Bibliothèque de l'Étoile* in 1948, and on Coméliau's career, see Kadima-Nzuji, *Littérature*, 278–294. On the Leverville concession, see B. Henriet, *Colonial Impotence. Virtue and Violence in a Congolese Concession (1911–1940)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

6 J. Coméliau, *L'Évolué* (Leverville: Bibliothèque de l'étoile, 1945), 11 and 13.

7 Ibid., 26.

8 Ibid., 29–31.

9 Ibid., 26. This book may also be understood as an early intervention by missionaries in the status debate. According to Coméliau, one had to reach 80 percent to merit such special treatment.

life,"[10] and only secondarily external hallmarks such as the absence of criminal convictions and the fulfilment of one's obligations to family and society. For Coméliau, anyone achieving one hundred points in the self-test was "a perfect *évolué*," less than 60 percent meant that one had just begun to develop, while those gaining less than fifty points "still [had it] all to learn."[11] While the book was printed in small numbers and was soon out of print, newspapers read by *évolués*, such as the *Croix du Congo*, referred to it time and again as a key source of information.[12]

One successor to this manners book was *Élite noire*, published in 1948 by the General Government's AIMO. Rather than a missionary, this was the work of a colonial official, namely Jean-Marie Domont, advisor to the *Voix du Congolais*. In the preface, Gustave Sand, who had championed the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique* as head of the AIMO, extolled the book as the first comprehensive etiquette manual, one that offered the reader advice on a daily basis: "The reader learns what he owes to himself, his family, his employer, society, the fatherland. On a case by case basis, then, he need only open up and leaf through this book to find an appropriate rule of conduct."[13]

The book's title says it all. This 135-page corpus of rules was aimed at those *évolués* who wished to belong to a Congolese elite "whose task it will be, in the Congo of the future, to replace Europeans in leading positions."[14] What the colonial official Domont meant by elite was dutiful *évolués* who were determined to work on themselves and serve as role models for the masses.[15] What the book preached to the reader, then, was physical, intellectual and moral perfection, for "without this complete self-perfecting, they [*évolués*] cannot lay claim to a

10 Ibid., 33.

11 Ibid., 46.

12 The *Croix du Congo,* in particular, continued to cite the book as an important work of reference. The newspaper responded in the negative, for example, when a reader asked whether an *évolué* could be polygamous, by referring to Coméliau's book; "Nouvelle de Partout," *Croix du Congo* (1 September 1946). The newspaper *Étoile Nyota*, published by the colonial government in Katanga, published excerpts from the book, thus contributing to its dissemination; *Étoile Nyota* (13 June 1946). An indication that *L'Évolué* was out of print by 1949 can be found in the *Croix du Congo* of 26 June 1949, which advises its readers to circulate the book among their friends.

13 Domont, *Élite noire*, 8.

14 Ibid., 134. The educated elite was treated as an elite-to-come contemporaneously in other African colonies. The British viewed "educated men" as the "ruling class of the future." See Eckert, *Herrschen*, 97.

15 Domont, *Élite noire*, 19.

role in the native society of tomorrow."[16] In its essential features and thrust, the book resembled its missionary forerunner, accentuating its rhetoric of perfectibility.

Despite the similarities between the two manners books, however, we must bear in mind that after 1945 missions and the colonial state increasingly began to compete in their efforts to forge a vernacular elite. This was apparent in the field of advice literature, particularly when the topic at issue was the importance of religion in perfecting oneself. A good example of this is the review of *Élite noire* in the daily *Croix du Congo*, which was close to the missions.[17] The reviewer complained that while the book was written in the Christian spirit, it kept quiet about the religious origin of its content. In his book, Domont, who had himself been a pupil at a Catholic boarding school in Belgium before studying at the Colonial University in Antwerp, described religion as conducive to "moral perfection" and Christian civilization as the foundation of Western civilization.[18] But clearly this did not go far enough for Catholic Action's press organ in the Belgian Congo. The *Croix du Congo* was of course in competition with the *Voix du Congolais*, with both seeking to attract *évolués*, and this critique was partly inspired by the fact that Domont was the colonial state's adviser to the latter publication. The representatives of Catholic Action, then, knew they had fallen behind the colonial state with respect to the *évolué* press, but would not let this go unchallenged.

By no means did this turf war lessen the potency of the debate on a Congolese elite for its addressees. The ideas of perfectibility and a moral elite were dominant not just in the discourse led by colonial policymakers and missionaries, but also in Congolese authors' discourse of self-affirmation. These *topoi* became particularly prominent in the newspapers *Voix du Congolais* and *Croix du Congo* in parallel to the debate on elite-making policy after 1944. Reading the *Voix du Congolais* conveys the impression that in his 1948 etiquette manual for *évolués* Domont had merely summarized the quintessence of all those articles in which Congolese authors engaged in a mutual exchange about who they were, or to be more precise: who they ought to be.

While the Congolese authors used the subjunctive mood when putting their demands and aspirations to the colonial state, their discourse of self-affirmation was dominated by the imperative. But they directed the discourse of perfecting primarily against themselves. Perfect Congolese, then, were not merely the object

16 Ibid., 131.
17 *Croix du Congo* (14 March 1948).
18 Domont, *Élite noire*, 54.

of the debate on an elite: the authors made themselves its subject. In their articles, for example, they referred to themselves as the "core, the elite of indigenous society,"[19] and laid claim to the role, allocated to them by European actors, as the *avant-garde* of an entire society's development. Antoine-Roger Bolamba, editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, referred in ideal-typical terms to "perfected blacks."[20] But how did these authors benefit from setting themselves up as moral apostles to their readers and invoking social obligations?

The *topos* of individual perfectibility presented the *évolués* with the prospect of nothing less than an improved social position and social prestige. In contrast to the racist ideologies so common in colonial discourse, which asserted an ultimately immutable difference between Europeans and Africans, the idea of perfecting, with its Enlightenment roots, implied that they might catch up culturally with the bourgeois European, who was regarded as an ideal-typical role model.[21]

Perfectibility, education and *avant-garde* elite: the *évolués*' developmental programme exhibited clear parallels with the ideas of intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois and his bourgeois conception of the so-called *new negro*. In the early twentieth century, he saw a classical education as the royal road to upward social mobility for African Americans and he was convinced that they must be led by an elite group, the so-called "talented tenth."[22] In both the Belgian Congo and the United States, the social ascent of the *new negro* constituted a direct challenge to a social order based on racial hierarchy. And in the struggle for recognition and equality, both Congolese and African Americans seeking upward mobility availed themselves of a "soft weapon": culture.

But the *évolués*' discourse of perfectibility could not omit reference to their deficiencies. As the supposed masterpiece of the Belgian civilizing mission, they had long been subject to vehement criticism from the Europeans resident in the Congo. One recurrent accusation was that the *évolué* put his civility on display but had not necessarily internalized it. In the 1920s the pejorative term "*vernivolués*"[23] did the rounds, which imputed to Congolese a form of development

19 A. Kagame, "L'évolué réel de l'Afrique Belge," *Voix du Congolais* no. 9 (May-June 1946): 356.
20 Bolamba, "Le Problème des évolués," 685.
21 On the discourse of perfectibility in the Enlightenment, one of whose proponents was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, see E. Behler, *Unendliche Perfektibilität. Europäische Romantik und Französische Revolution* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1989).
22 See W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of Today*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: J. Pott & Co, 1903). On the configuration of African American intellectuals, see A. Pochmara, *The Making of the New Negro. Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).
23 Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 84.

as superficial as nail varnish – and just as liable to crack. What came to light when the polished layer chipped off was a recurrent question in the colonial discourse on assimilated Africans, not just in Belgian territory but also in the French, Portuguese and British empires.[24] Descriptions in articles by European authors on *évolué* status, which I have cited several times in the present book, point to a continuity in this invective, whose roots lay just as much in racist prejudices as in fears of the symbolic questioning of colonial rule. In these texts the *évolués* are described as "deplorably spoiled children,"[25] "cosmetic Christians"[26] and "semi-developed"; they are cast as individuals who "despite their Europeanized appearance remain atavistic at bottom."[27] More than a few Europeans imputed to the *évolués* infantility, clumsiness and falsity and sneered at the "aping"[28] of civilized behaviour by Congolese.

Belgian publications from the 1890s on, and later newspapers in the Congo as well, increasingly featured, in addition to cannibals, African colonial dandies.[29] These figures of fun, with their imitation of a European lifestyle, were a source of amusement in advertising imagery and strip cartoons in the dailies. The most prominent example is the early work of Belgian cartoonist Hergé entitled *Tintin in the Congo*.[30] When Tintin gruffly commands a group of thick-lipped and very black Congolese to right a derailed train, one of them refuses to help in broken French: "But...me get dirty."[31] Hergé portrays the grumbler as a dandy in hat and tails, a black-and-green striped tie, white collar and cuffs, but bare-chested. A grotesque half-naked man in a tie, unwilling to work so as not to get his hands dirty – the racist stereotype of the "semi-developed" is neatly captured in this caricature.

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24 On the French and Portuguese cases, see Keese, *Living*, 101–102, 107. On British Tanganyika, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 145–147.

25 Rubbens, "Le problème des évolués," *Essor du Congo* (18 October 1944), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 113.

26 Zuyderhoff, "La solution isolationniste," reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 118.

27 L. Ballegeer, "Le rôle social des évolués," *Essor du Congo* (5 May 1945), reprinted in Rubbens, *Dettes*, 139.

28 References to "aping" can be found both in contemporary accounts on the denigration of the *évolués* and in statements in interviews that take a critical view of this group's role. J. Vandelinden, *Pierre Ryckmans*, 726; interview with Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010; A. Varney, "Au sujet d'une conférence," *Croix du Congo* (21 December 1952).

29 On this section, see N. R. Hunt, "Tintin and the Interruptions of Congolese Comics," in *Images and Empires. Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, eds. P. S. Landau and D. D. Kaspin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 100 and 113.

30 Hergé, *Tintin in the Congo* (Brussels: Casterman, 1952). To quote the original: "*Mais... mais... moi va salir moi.*"

31 Ibid., 20.

But the unmasking of Africans who had appropriated European culture was by no means specific to the Belgian Congo. In Hergé's depictions of Congolese we can discern a template, namely the minstrel shows. In the United States of the nineteenth century, these shows brought whites in blackface to the stage, parodying African Americans through overblown characters, and holding up to ridicule their pursuit of social integration at a time when the abolition of slavery was underway.[32] But the depictions of *évolués*, which imputed to them a craving for status, charlatanry and absurdity, not only resembled the characters in the minstrel shows, but also the racist depictions commonly found in other European countries of educated Africans dressed in European style. In the German Empire, for example, "trousered *Negro*" had been a source of amusement since the 1880s.[33] But this was laughter that merely provided temporary relief from fears of the "crossing of a racial status barrier,"[34] for an African with a Europeanized manner always represented a threat to a social order based on the colonial distinction between Europeans as rulers and Africans as ruled.

Against this background it is no surprise, particularly in the course of the debate on status after 1945, that reports of the symbolic violation of norms by *évolués* began to mount up in the Belgian Congo, with their supposedly exaggerated conduct becoming the object of mockery. While many educated Congolese adopted European first names when they were baptized, some also adorned themselves with imaginative European versions of their surnames. Patrice Lumumba called himself Mumbard[35] for a time, while Mafinge became Maffighet; others chose Whykyzz and Massoudith as pseudonyms.[36] In everyday life, the core idea underpinning the civilizing mission, namely that colonial subjects would learn to lead a civilized life by imitating Europeans, was drowned out by guffaws of laughter. Europeans' mockery prompted authors writing for the *Voix du Congolais* to call for a new self-description: "The term *évolués* has become a nightmare for us, for certain Europeans say it with outright derision."[37] Henceforth, their articles increasingly referred to a special group that conceived of itself as a "civilizational elite."

Further, what European and Congolese authors both complained about within the public debate was some *évolués*' demonstrative aversion to the less edu-

32 On the history of the minstrel show, see R. C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

33 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 237.

34 Ibid., 238.

35 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 72.

36 J. Selemani, "Les évolués et leurs noms," *Nyota Etoile* (6 March 1947): 2.

37 A.-R. Bolamba, "Le problème des évolués," 684 – 686.

cated. We might concede that such mockery, which sometimes featured in the encounter between elite and masses, was a successful imitation of the kind of European conduct to which the *évolués* were often exposed. In any case, these accounts played a part in ensuring that the term "snobs"[38] became established within the normative elite discourse on "false" *évolués*. The term had already gained currency in Great Britain in the eighteenth century as a term for social climbers who believed they could ascend within society by imitating the cultural practices of the nobility and behaved with haughty arrogance towards their lower-class group of origin.[39] The origin of the term explains why the British administration in Tanganyika in the 1950s also referred to "social snobs" when complaining about the educated elites' lack of contact with ordinary workers.[40] Whether in British or Belgian Africa: in the context of late colonial elite formation, the snob appeared as the polar opposite of the "perfected black."

Congolese authors challenged Europeans' critique and derision. By affirming their perfectibility and calling for exemplary conduct in media such as the *Voix du Congolais*, they sought to counter European commentators who intended to torpedo the reform of elite status by highlighting the *évolués*' inadequacies. These authors lent weight to their claim to distinction in articles propagating an idealized representation of the *évolués*, along with their attributes and duties in the new Congolese society. The newspapers increasingly functioned as a medial site of colonial subject formation that endeavoured to help create the elite. Here elite discourse produced two "cultural figures"[41] that were diametrically opposed: the "perfected black," a virtuous figure whose values and behaviours were considered European and civilized in the colonial idiom, and the snob or "presumptuous *évolué*,"[42] who lacked these qualities. These figures condensed the debates on the desirable and undesirable conduct of the elite Congolese,

38 Domont referred contemptuously to a "certain snobbishness" characteristic of the elite; Domont, *Élite noire*, 28.

39 W. M. Thackeray, *Book of Snobs* (London: Punch, 1868).

40 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 146.

41 The analytical concept of the cultural figure has the advantage that it covers not just stereotypes circulated in the media and cultural representations, but also their individual embodiment in practice. This is precisely what I am getting at in the following remarks. For a discussion of the term, see M. Ege, *Ein Proll mit Klasse. Mode, Popkultur und soziale Unterschichten unter jungen Männern in Berlin* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013), 36–73. In terms of the history of concepts, the cultural trope combines aspects of "stereotypes, media images, constructs of identity and proposed modes of subjectification"; M. Ege, "Zur Performativität von 'wannabees,'" in *Orte – Situationen – Atmosphären. Kulturanalytische Skizzen*, ed. B. Binder et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010), 302 and 289–290.

42 L. Embae, "Il y a 'évolués' et 'évolués,'" *Voix du Congolais* no. 19 (October 1947): 816.

his legitimate cultural practices and social spaces, his role as head of a nuclear family and as civilizational role model for African society. It was through these tropes that it became clear who ought to be regarded as a "genuine" and "false" *évolué*. This was a normative discourse that resembled, in its style and the institutions it propagated, the debate unfolding in Belgium since the mid-nineteenth century on "good" and "bad" workers; they too were so identified according to the extent to which they complied with the imperative of a moral lifestyle.[43] These cultural tropes figures also identificatory overtures for readers, and the elite newspapers spent a lot of time discussing to what extent these ideal-typical qualities had been internalized. This discussion furnishes us with a perspective on models of living and social practices that reveal the ambivalent results of elite formation. As Congolese appropriated certain modes of conduct within their everyday life, cultural bourgeoisification oscillated between incorporation and contradiction.

Education and character building

More than anything else, the debate on the new elite identified education as its hallmark. It was the graduates of mission secondary schools who were generally regarded as *évolués:* education was their symbolic and cultural capital. As the primary site of colonial subject formation,[44] the Catholic mission schools drilled their pupils to work on themselves, physically and mentally.[45] In associations, meanwhile, *évolués* had to continue to work on their self-optimization outside school, which meant proving their rhetorical abilities and intellectual proficiency. The most assiduous association members published their talks in the press, with titles that are testimony to their didactic style, such as "How does one get married?"[46] and "How does one raise one's children?"[47] The eloquent *évolué*, as

43 On the ideology and practice of the moralization and cultural bourgeoisification of the Belgian working class, see J. Puissant, "Le bon ouvrier."

44 Wirz, "Einleitung," 9.

45 But it was not just in the Belgian Congo that character-building was on the curriculum. In British Tanganyika, the Government School in Tabora, where administrative staff were trained, emphasized – in addition to the imparting of knowledge – above all the training of character, by means, for example, of team sports and work of use to the community. See Eckert, *Herrschen*.

46 E. Ngandu, "Comment se marier," *Voix du Congolais* no. 11 (September-October 1946).

47 N. Mutombo, "Comment élever nos enfants," *Voix du Congolais* no. 60 (March 1951).

a type, was in accord with pre-colonial ideals of masculinity, which included skills of oratory as well as hunting.[48]

Due to the rudimentary education system, the exemplary *évolués* became autodidacts who continued to educate themselves after office hours through constant reading. One contributor to the *Voix du Congolais* from Coquilhatville presented the cultural practice of reading as the best way of building character: "Reading is more than a pleasure. It is a must for those *évoluants* who wish to perfect themselves."[49] The art of reading involved not just reading "correctly," with patience, persistence and a deliberate approach, but also reading the "right" things, such as "work-related material" or "masterpieces of literature."[50] Selecting books was the preserve of missions and colonial officials, who established a library for the *évolués* in every part of the colony. Mastery of the French language, particularly among authors, was proof of their self-perfecting. In many articles penned by Congolese, the Larousse dictionary served to clarify contested words such as "civilization" and "development"[51] or specialist terms, as in one piece on the care of infants.[52]

Various actors sought to appeal to Congolese who felt this desire for education and knowledge. A bookshop in the Belgian town of Gozée advertised a 944-page specialist dictionary by Larousse in the *Croix du Congo*. The caption was aimed at *évolués:* "Do you wonder at the whites' science and extensive knowledge? You too can become highly intelligent and know everything thanks to the Larousse dictionary."[53] What this business promised its customers was a talisman against ignorance; it was alluding to a common vernacular interpretation that book knowledge and the ability to write were nothing less than the white man's powerful magic. Congolese who had attended school were thus regarded as "great initiates of the mysterious *bwanga* of education, which helps the whites achieve strength and wealth."[54]

But state and missionary actors not only wished to impart knowledge and abilities. For them, the education of *évolués* chiefly meant character-building. The European patrons of Congolese associations, for example, sought to comply with the state's character-enhancing mandate by consciously facilitating discus-

48 Gondola, *Tropical*, 12.

49 R.-P. Mujinga, "La voix de la raison," *Voix du Congolais* no. 36 (March 1949): 111.

50 M. Colin, "L'art de lire," *Voix du Congolais* no. 75 (June 1952): 341.

51 A.-M. Mobé, "Encore un mot au sujet de la Carte du Mérite Civique," *Voix du Congolais* no. 60 (March 1951): 123.

52 Mutombo, "Comment élever nos enfants," 131.

53 Advertisement printed in *Croix du Congo* (27 January 1952).

54 Rubbens, *Dettes*, 113.

sion of texts about a variety of topics, which they had received from the General Government's Press Department. This they did with varying degrees of success. After a talk on touch typing, a territorial administrator in Djolu cabled Léopoldville to report that his listeners were only interested in the technical aspects, though the main objective had been to impart a work ethic. The participants' interest may have been due to the fact that clerical work in the administrative system was one of the most lucrative careers for Congolese and the ability to type increased one's chances of employment. While the association members saw the talk as a welcome source of vocational training, for the colonial official this was merely a misapprehension intrinsic to elite-making policy. For as we saw earlier in the case of the etiquette manual for *évolués*, education was a holistic concept that encompassed knowledge, but even more importantly a canon of values, rules of conduct and ways of life. "A black who can speak French and use a typewriter is not automatically developed,"[55] as the disgruntled official remarked.

The boundary between acceptable and recalcitrant *évolués* was drawn between character-building and property, in accordance with the notion of an inner and outer form of development. Thus, the critique of *évolués*' excessively materialistic attitudes, also put forward by Congolese authors, was no coincidence. In the relevant newspapers they evaluated development and civility in the light of moral or Christian criteria. For them, this inner form of education stood in contrast to material dimensions. One correspondent employed at the *Voix du Congolais* in Kabinda thus warned: "Without spiritual development one remains stuck at the stage of savagery seen at the beginning of the century."[56] The critique of excessive and immoral consumerism and of a type of self-presentation among *évolués* that, in the view of many authors, went beyond legitimate forms of social distinction, filled the press by the pageful and thus merits close examination.

55 Letter from De Walsche to the head of the Information Office in Léopoldville, 11 August 1955, AA/GG/5991.

56 P. Kangudie, "La véritable évolution doit être spirituelle et non seulement matérielle," *Voix du Congolais* no. 52 (July 1950): 414.

Clothes (do not) make *évolués*

Studies in the cultural history of Africa agree that clothing is by no means just material, but constitutes a "politics of costume."[57] In a study of recreational culture in colonial Brazzaville, Phyllis Martin points out that even in the tropical climate of central Africa, clothing and adornments were primarily used to symbolize social difference and status.[58] Hence, we may view the colonial situation as an encounter between two societies, both of which featured a sense of clothing as a "social skin"[59] and thus an awareness of outwardly legible "distinction."[60]

Yet there were not only differing ideas about the functions of clothing and who had to comply with which dress code, but also infringements of the various sartorial orders. For European missionaries, the "fashioning of the colonial subject"[61] was centered on covering up African "nakedness." On the missionary reading, the wearing of clothes was indicative of an advancing civilizing mission, because they assumed that European clothing had a disciplining effect on its wearers.[62] But clothing also served as a marker, visible to all, of differences between Europeans and Africans. The social hierarchy was reflected in a "colonial sartorial order."[63] In the world of work, Europeans insisted on compliance with clothing norms that underscored the subordinate role of African employees. Policemen, servants and soldiers were prohibited from wearing shoes, and violations of these symbolic boundaries incurred sanctions.[64] African staff in administrative offices came closest to the norms of European working clothes: they were allowed to wear socks and shoes to work.[65]

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57 J. Picton and J. Mack, *African Textiles: Looms, Weaving and Design* (London: Textile Museum, 1979), 175, quoted in Martin, "Contesting Clothes," 405. An overview is provided by J. Allmann, ed., *Fashioning Africa. Power and the Politics of Dress* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

58 Martin, "Contesting Clothes," 401. According to Martin, in equatorial regions of Africa power and prosperity had already been manifested in choice of clothing since early times.

59 T. S. Turner, "The Social Skin," in *Not Work Alone. A Cross-Cultural View of Activities Superfluous to Survival*, eds. J. Cherfass and R. Lewin (London: Temple Smith, 1980).

60 Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede*.

61 Comaroff and Comaroff, *Revelation*, 218.

62 Ibid., 218–222.

63 M. Pesek, "Der koloniale Körper in der Krise. Koloniale Repräsentationen, Ordnung und Gewalt während des Ersten Weltkriegs in Ostafrika, 1914–1918," in *Dem Anderen Begegnen. Eigene und fremde Repräsentationen in sozialen Gemeinschaften*, eds. J. Baberowski et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2009), 68.

64 Martin, "Contesting Clothes," 408.

65 Ibid.

For the *évolués* in the Belgian Congo too, employment in firms or the colonial administration opened up access to consumer products and styles of clothing with which they could exhibit social prestige. The imagery found in newspapers for Congolese readers was peopled by men wearing ironed suits, white shirts, ties and polished shoes. This bourgeois "hegemonic clothing"[66] so widespread in the colonial realm and the associated norms of cleanliness promised to turn social standing, individual success and civilizational development from an external to an internal phenomenon.[67] By wearing bourgeois clothes, the *évolués* also hoped that Europeans would grant them recognition and view them as respectable.

If the Congolese wearers of European clothing sometimes made inappropriate sartorial choices, there were consequences. One reader of the *Voix du Congolais* related how he was refused entry to a ship on which he had booked passage due to his overly "simple" get-up but was allowed on the next day thanks to his "urban attire." Despite this experience, he was only partially willing to accept the epigram "clothes make the man."[68] For as the Congolese authors saw it, it was not enough to appear in European clothing. This must also be worn correctly, and one's self-stylization as a civilized person must be matched on the inside by advanced moral values.[69] A lot of ink was spilt over the fact that, often, this congruence was absent.

While the Congolese elite's working world recognized clear sartorial conventions, their free time opened up a far greater range of possibilities to get dressed up. Some remained in their work clothes as proof of their membership of a prestigious occupational group, while for others the end of the working day ushered in a different reality. The world of spare time revealed the limits of the colonial state's ability to control local practices of self-presentation and uphold the colonial distinctions in the clothing order. Here we find platforms for self-portraiture featuring attire and behaviours that were absent from the colonial elite-making script. Beyond the working world, European fashion was by no means the pre-

66 A. Meyerrose, *Herren im Anzug. Eine transatlantische Geschichte von Klassengesellschaften im langen 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2016), 29.

67 As the son of an *évolué* affirmed, one had to prove one's cleanliness in an intractable environment. His father, he explained, tucked a small cloth into his sock so he could enter his place of work or association buildings with shiny shoes; his bicycle, meanwhile, prevented contact with the dusty terrain. Interview with Jean de la Croix Mobé, Kinshasa, 14 September 2010.

68 H.-D. Katoto, "L'habit ne fait pas le moine," *Voix du Congolais* no. 18 (September 1947).

69 This was paralleled in the contemporaneous elite discourse on fashion in Congo-Brazzaville. See Martin, "Contesting Clothes," 421.

serve of clerks; it found its way into a stylistic repertoire that is testimony to a subversive appropriation of the colonial clothing order.[70]

In the *Voix du Congolais* correspondents from all over the country aired their views on violations of the dress code. For them, "the imperfections of these presumptuous *évolués*, whose behaviour is an affront to the noble sensibilities of upright people,"[71] were a threat to the *évolués*' dignity and respectability. They believed their treatment as civilized people was at stake, as this depended on appropriate conduct.[72]

The Congolese authors were evidently keen to provide a precise description of a maladjusted appearance, so their articles furnish us with an interesting insight into the distinction-practices of the "false" *évolués*. Also known as "presumptuous *évolués*,'" their deviation from the sartorial norm was an inevitable result of the normative discourse on the "true" *évolué*. They were assailed for failing to abide by the "classic rules,"[73] while instead indulging in an extravagance bordering on the ridiculous. They wore so-called swing trousers, known in the United States of the 1930s as "Charleston pants," that were several sizes too large,[74] waistcoats, with exaggerated shoulder pads, that were either too tight or loose like a frock coat, hats slanted to the point of covering their ears and dark glasses indoors. They also adorned themselves to striking effect, for example with an *aiguillette* from the military wardrobe, bracelets and several pens in their shirt pocket. These "show-offs"[75] also commanded attention due to their colourful clothing, "jarring ties" and headgear "of a red that would send the calmest of bulls into a rage or of a green that makes the dogs bark."[76]

The articles penned by the elite hand-wringers articulated their discontent at the fact that this eccentric and over-the-top choice of clothing reinforced claims of the *évolués*' imperfection. For similar reasons, these authors also rebuked *évolués*' wives. They advised them to forgo off-the-peg European clothing and make-

70 Ibid., 408.

71 Embae, "Il y a 'évolués,'" 816.

72 E. Yembe, "Voulons-nous être traités en hommes civilisés?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 37 (April 1949).

73 Editorial note on ibid., 135.

74 Swing trousers were mentioned in several articles in the *Voix du Congolais*. Yembe, "Voulons-nous," ; "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 39 (June 1949): 145–146; G. K. Levent, "Pourquoi ne pas le dire," *Voix du Congolais* no. 53 (August 1950). On swing fashion in central Africa, see P. M. Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 171.

75 Embae, "Il y a 'évolués,'" 817.

76 Yembe, "Voulons-nous," 315.

up, and instead to wear blouses and dresses of "nice native material."[77] There were differing views about which motifs were appropriate for printing on the material known as *pagnes*. While the author of one article regarded typewriters, railways and spark plugs as absurd motifs,[78] the author of a reader's letter pointed out to him that the clothing worn by European women was adorned with depictions of birds, animals and flowers.[79] The public wearing, and male authors' medial defence, of these specific symbols on the *pagnes* of Congolese women highlights the fact, first, that in contrast to male *évolués* the female wardrobe did not copy European women's fashion. The male-dominated elite newspapers, it is true, propagated a uniforming of women featuring blouses and dresses that reflected the conservative norm of post-war Europe, but insisted on distinction *vis-à-vis* the European women in the colony through home-made clothing. Second, there was a preference for status symbols drawn from modern imaginaries that displayed social ascent and participation in worlds of consumption – an emblematic example is the typewriter as a tool of office workers, who had the most lucrative jobs among educated Congolese.

Inherent in this aesthetic criticism of style advanced by Congolese authors was a critique of consumerism. For even the wearing of correct and proper clothing was rebuked as overblown or was suspected of embodying hedonistic materialism if an individual invested a large portion of his monthly income in a "fancy, brand-new fabric."[80] Elite discourse, with its moral critique of consumption, linked external self-presentation to the proportionality of expenditure. Precisely because, in the colonial situation, clothing symbolized social status and civilizational development, authors working for elite newspapers, almost all of whom were better-educated high earners, often mocked those who adorned themselves with "borrowed plumes." As a result of the "true" *évolués*' discourse of self-affirmation, it was not just Europeans but also the Congolese elite that monitored compliance with the colonial clothing order. What they had in common were fears of the selective, creative and insubordinate style of dress typical of the "false" *évolués*. Rather than indicating social positions within the colonial order,[81] dress codes were losing their clarity – and thus some of their symbolic power.

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77 J. Lomboto, "Pour un peu de mesure," *Voix du Congolais* no. 34 (January 1949): 18.

78 Yembe, "Voulons-nous," 315.

79 "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 39 (June 1949): 146.

80 Levent, "Pourquoi," 476 – 478.

81 Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Dominic Thomas argues that the various strategies of self-presentation enabled African authors to attain social power through symbolic acts; D.

The descriptions of "presumptuous *évolués*" in the elite newspapers are reminiscent of the *sapeurs* movement, which rose to prominence from the 1960s onwards in Congo-Brazzaville. Historical writing on the *sapeurs* as Congolese dandies focuses on the post-colonial era and underlines the discrepancy between their marginal social situation and their eccentric, expensive wardrobe. But the existing studies see their historical predecessors in those fashion-conscious and hedonistic milieus of Brazzaville and Léopoldville[82] that the elite newspapers condemned for their showing off, immoral consumption and norm infringement. These colonial dandies in the Belgian Congo shared with their European dandy forerunners of the *fin de siècle* the transgression of bourgeois norms and acts of outlandish self-staging – the inclination to pursue classiness rather than to seek membership of a class.[83] Meanwhile, the colonial dandy shared with his African American counterpart a form of demonstrative "self-fashioning," which was derided in many quarters despite, or because of, the political call for equality it seemed to entail.[84]

Alcohol and bar culture

It was not just colonial subjects' outward appearance, but also their lifestyle, social etiquette and sites of sociability that came under critical observation by Congolese authors who expressed their views on the *évolués* in the relevant organs of the press. They were particularly critical of the popular bars as sites of alcohol consumption and vice.

If we can believe the Congolese commentators, bars were places where "presumptuous *évolués*" took things to extremes. Their excessive alcohol consumption supposedly degenerated into contests to establish who could drink the most and who could pay the biggest bill. In the *Voix du Congolais* indignant authors provided detailed accounts of these competitions, which took place in pub-

Thomas, "Fashion Matters. 'La Sape' and Vestimentary Codes in Transnational Contexts and Urban Diasporas," *Modern Language Notes* 118 (2003): 954.

82 J.-D. Gandoulou, *Dandies à Bacongo* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 32–38 and 40–45; Gondola, *Villes*, 239–248. Elsewhere, Gondola argues convincingly that the Sape movement was a cultural phenomenon that emerged in the 1940s simultaneously in both Brazzaville and Léopoldville: Ch. D. Gondola, "Dream and Drama: The Search for Elegance among Congolese Youth," *African Studies Review* 42 (1999): 26–27.

83 G. Stein, ed., *Dandy – Snob – Flaneur. Dekadenz und Exzentrik. Kulturfiguren und Sozialcharaktere des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985).

84 See M. L. Miller, "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Dandy as Diasporic Race Man," *Callaloo* 26, no. 3 (2003).

lic spaces on the first Saturday of the month, that is, payday. Those involved, we are told, ordered twelve bottles of beer at once, "to attract the other guests' attention through their well-supplied table, an abundance that drew envious glances."[85] The consumers outdid each other in their orders: "*X* pays for six bottles of beer, *y* demands ten, and *z*, at the neighbouring table, orders an entire crate. What is this madness?"[86] Apologists for the "perfected black" were displeased by the poor image conveyed by these supposed *évolués* in public settings. Barside status battles ran counter to the authors' belief that the elite should be distinguished chiefly by moral conduct. Further, the commentators spotted former mission school pupils among the bar-goers and accused them of forgetting the moral lessons of their Christian education.[87] The motto of one of these bar patrons quoted in the *Voix du Congolais* demonstrates than some school leavers sought to achieve other forms of recognition than the kind propagated in elite moral discourse: "A man of renown has to assert his status in the bar in front of others, and since leaving school I have grown accustomed to indulging my whims."[88]

What Emmanuel Akyeampong has written of bar culture in the British colony of the Gold Coast, then, pertained in the Belgian Congo as well: sites of public drinking were an important meeting place within an urban culture. Here new city-dwellers could display their success through western fashion, communal drinking and demonstrative consumption. Imported or industrially produced alcohol was particularly significant, because in the villages it was generally the exclusive preserve of respected persons and authorities.[89] A sip of an imported bottled beer tasted of upward social mobility, and the higher-earning *évolués* in Léopoldville were adept at emphasizing their social position through an expensive after-work Beck's.[90]

85 Lomboto, "Pour un peu," 19.

86 Levent, "Pourquoi," 477.

87 Ibid.

88 Songolo, "Réflexions," 444.

89 E. K. Akyeampong, "'Wo pe tam won pe ba.' Urbanization, Individualism & Gender Relation in Colonial Ghana," in *Africa's Urban Past*, eds. D. Anderson and R. Rathbone (Portsmouth: James Currey, 2000); E. K. Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Cultural Change. Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth: James Currey, 1996). For an overview of alcohol in Africa, see Ch. Ambler, "Alcohol, Racial Segregation and Popular Politics in Northern Rhodesia," *Journal of African History* 31, no. 2 (1990); D. Van den Bersselaar, *The King of Drinks. Schnapps Gin from Modernity to Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

90 Interview with André Matingu, Kinshasa, 7 September 2010; interview with Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010. In the novel *Ngemena* Paul Lomami-Tshibamba has African office workers in Léopoldville drinking a toast with a bottle of Beck's beer; P. Lomami-Tshibamba, *Nge-*

Fig. 7: Evening event in a bar in Léopoldville, 1945.

The quantities of alcohol sold also gave the champions of the "true" *évolués* cause for concern, as a study of the African districts in Léopoldville of 1947 underlines. Here Emmanuel Capelle, who was responsible for the Congolese residents of the capital as *chef de la population noire*, concluded that expenditure on the locally produced bottled beer of the Primus brand alone devoured a quarter of the entire population's monthly earnings. He calculated that on average an adult drank between twenty and thirty bottles a month.[91]

In the African quarters of Léopoldville there were just shy of one hundred bars, whose licenses contributed to the colonial administration's coffers. The colonial administration stipulated that the drinks they sold must not contain more than 4 percent alcohol.[92] They were thus limited to selling beer. Wine and spirits were forbidden to Congolese, though those with *évolué* status were an exception. Strict laws on alcohol in the Belgian Congo, which permitted only the supposed-

mena (Yaoundé: Cle, 1981), 28. Advertisements for Beck's that appear to have been devised exclusively for exports to the tropics were already appearing in magazines such as *L'Illustration Congolaise*, aimed at Europeans in the Congo, in the 1930s. These show a rotund man with a monocle against a background of palms, along with slogans extolling the beer's liberal consumption.

91 E. Capelle, *La Cité Indigène* (Elisabethville: C.E.P.S.I., 1947), 49 – 50.

92 See ibid.

ly more developed consumers to enjoy drinks with a high alcohol content were flanked by a moral debate on the devastating consequences of consuming such beverages for character development.

European and Congolese authors agreed that alcohol was the *évolués*' enemy. The "risks and wrongdoing [involved in] alcohol"[93] were elucidated in talks, articles, posters and brochures that addressed not just the educated stratum but the whole of society. Etienne Ngandu, who worked as a doctor's assistant, warned that intoxication was a threat to morality, intelligence, the capacity for work, health, the sense of professional and familial duty, fertility and religiosity.[94] As a correspondent for the *Croix du Congo*, Patrice Lumumba, an up-and-coming postal worker at the time, warned all those who saw themselves as part of the elite: "One develops no further if one drinks a lot."[95] Calls for moderate alcohol consumption by the colonial state and its Congolese intermediaries were in continuity with the campaigns launched by the Catholic church as well as the BOP and *Parti Libéral*. In Belgium, they had considered the bourgeois virtues of temperance and abstinence part of the ideal of the "good worker" since the 1880s.[96]

In the eyes of Congolese journalists, it was in significant part the nature of the interaction between men and women in bars that made them dens of vice. Urban bar culture ran counter to the gendered order and moral values imparted by elite discourse. "Take a look at them at the threshold of the modern bar, where the lovers meet," began an eye-witness report on a Saturday night in Léopoldville, on which the "young people of the elite," having drunk an ample quantity of beer, danced "in the style of Jean Lemort, the famous dancer from Martinique, [...] the air replete with the noise of jazz, yelling and the loud laughter of drunk women."[97] This urban bar culture, with its transatlantic influences, fashions from Martinique and African American music, was not in harmony with the Congo of tomorrow as envisaged by elite authors. Its hedonistic eclecticism clashed with the bourgeois clothing and self-restraint that *évolués* were sup-

93 E. Ngandu, "Dangers et méfaits de l'alcool," *Voix du Congolais* no. 14 (March-April 1947).
94 E. Ngandu, "L'Alcoolisme et les maux du buveur," *Voix du Congolais* no. 52 (July 1950). The General Government's official publications on alcoholism are written in a particularly alarming tone: Éditions Service de l'Information, *Reviens à la vie! L'Élite congolaise contre l'Alcoolisme* (Kalina: 1953). See also the section on alcohol in Domont, *Élite noire*, 28 – 29.
95 P. Lumumba, "Quand on se connait soi-même, que reste-il à faire?," *Croix du Congo* (19 November 1950).
96 On the pro-abstinence propaganda of the Belgian parties, see Vleugels, *Narratives*, 38 and 171.
97 Levent, "Pourquoi," 477.

posed to embrace. The advocates of perfectibility felt that the hopes they had placed in the next generation of educated Africans had been dashed. From the perspective of Christian and bourgeois values, in fact, they regarded these boozy evenings as veritably vice-ridden.

This moral panic over drinking venues was also triggered by the so-called *femmes libres*, unmarried women who frequented bars and had a special residence status in the cities.[98] They made a living selling beer or as the proprietors of shops. For those with the status of single *femmes libres*, the Belgian authorities even introduced a tax in the colonial cities.[99] In addition to their fashion-consciousness they were known for their occasional love affairs or sexual services, preferably involving prosperous Congolese. Elite discourse suspected female bar-goers either of being prostitutes or of practising a concealed form of polygamy. Bars were also viewed as places where supposedly monogamous men could get together with their unofficial second wives. Many were reluctant to report their polygamy to the colonial administration, which once again imposed a tax on this, before making it illegal in 1950. In elite discourse, Congolese authors accused those in the employ of the colonial state in particular of using bars as cover for their continued practice of polygamy while at the same time benefiting from the state's financial support for monogamous marriages.[100]

In elite discourse, the lifeworld of the bar was the perfect foil for the legitimate social spaces of the "perfected blacks," namely recreational associations and the monogamous, bourgeois family home. For while the discourse on "genuine" and "false" *évolués* was first and foremost an exchange between Congolese men regarding a masculinity characterized as "civilized," it was always also concerned with desired forms of femininity and family. As head of the family, it was the man's task to rule over his wife with a protecting hand and in this way to produce a "civilized gender order."[101]

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98 On the gender roles in Congo's colonial cities and the social category of *femmes libres*, see Ch. D. Gondola, "Unies pour le meilleur et pour le pire. Femmes africaines et villes coloniale. Une histoire du métissage," *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire d'Afrique* 6 (1997); For a general account of gender in Africa, see O. Goerg, *Perspectives historiques sur le genre en Afrique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007); Miescher, *Making*.

99 On what Nancy Rose Hunt has fittingly described as "moral taxation," see Hunt, "Noise," 471–494.

100 This practice was criticised as immoral and illegal by Congolese representatives on the Provincial Council of Équateur province; R.-P. Mujinga, "Indemnités familiales et... polygamie 'camouflée,'" *Voix du Congolais* no. 48 (March 1950).

101 On this concept, see Frevert and Pernau, "Europa," 7.

The *évolué* family

The pioneering thinkers of colonial subject formation in the missionary and state contexts regarded the family as the nucleus of the new social order – and as evidence of the *évolués*' developmental progress.[102] The concept of the new Congolese family, as propagated within the framework of Belgian developmental colonialism, necessitated a shift in ideas about gender roles, childhood and domesticity, as well as repudiation of the widely practised polygamy.[103] Representations of a bourgeois gender order dominated the newspapers of the Belgian Congo. At the centre of this order stood the male *évolué*, a "respectable man, master of his home and breadwinner."[104] Photographs commissioned by the General Government's Propaganda Department showed the married man surrounded by his family, seated at table for dinner with his family, reading in an armchair while his wife takes care of his offspring, and saying goodbye to his wife, who is handing him his hat on the doorstep before he sets off for work.[105] Behind every "real" *évolué* there had to be a "perfected" wife.[106]

While the desired shift in gender roles threw up plenty of conflict, it was reinforced by the fact that it was above all men who were trained for paid employment. Because they had to pay for their family's upkeep, their position of power was cemented within the familial gender order. Women's traditional forms of work, such as subsistence farming or selling at markets, played no role in this concept. Voices within the elite press expressed opposition to the matriarchal family structures common in some parts of the Belgian Congo, which clashed with the ideal of the devoted and responsible married man as head of the nucle-

102 See P. Taquet, "'J'attends mon mari' ou la promotion des familles heureuses au Congo Belge. Aperçu du service social colonial feminine au Congo Belge (1945 – 1960)" (Master's diss., Université Libre Bruxelles, Brussels, 2005), 57 – 60.

103 Hunt, "Noise," 475 – 476.

104 B. Jewsiewicki, "Residing in Kinshasa. Between Colonial Modernization and Globalization," *Research in African Literatures* 39, no. 4 (2008): 107.

105 The images described here can be found in the photograph collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren.

106 For a general discussion of women in the history of the Congo, see Hunt, "Noise"; N. R. Hunt, "Hommes et femmes, sujets du Congo colonial," in *Les mémoires du Congo. Le temps colonial*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Gent: Éditions Snoeck, 2005); A. Lauro, "Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, ed. Thomas Spear (May 2020), accessed March 10, 2021, doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.544. G. Mianda, "L'état, le genre et l'iconographie. L'image de la femme au Congo belge," in *Images, mémoires et savoirs. Une histoire en partage avec Bogumil Koss Jewsiewicki*, eds. I. Ndaywel è Nziem and E. Mudimbe-Boyi (Paris: Karthala, 2009).

ar family. The *Voix du Congolais* reprinted an article from the Dakar-based *Afrique Nouvelle*, in which a priest from the Ivory Coast described the matriarchy as a pan-African hindrance to the emergence of the nuclear family. Because the matriarchy granted guardianship of offspring to the mother's brother rather than the father, the article argued, it discouraged married men from viewing themselves as family heads and providers.[107] From the province of Bas-Congo came articles bidding farewell to the matriarchy that had held sway there and proclaiming the victory of the Christian nuclear family.[108]

Fundamental to the *évolué* family as envisaged in missionary and state propaganda was the invention of the Congolese housewife. Her task was to submit to a concept that ended the traditional kin group, featuring a large number of related individuals, and replaced it with the nuclear family, with the man as its sole head. Belgian jurist Antoine Sohier, who was responsible for drawing up a status reform for Congolese regarded as civilized, called on the woman to accept this new conception of the family, "in order to create an independent, 'new family,' which forms the base and the cement of every developed society."[109]

The education of the "developed woman"[110] consisted in mastering new gender roles and cultural techniques. The first *foyers sociaux* had already been established in the inter-war period in Léopoldville, Elisabethville and Coquilhatville under the leadership of Catholic missionaries and the colonial administration,[111] their goal to familiarize Congolese women with the "colonized culture of *évolué* domesticity."[112] After the Second World War both Christian Social and Liberal colonial ministers granted subsidies to these privately run institutions.[113] The *foyers sociaux* were the female counterpart of the exclusively male *évolué* associations.[114] They were headed by the wives of Belgian colonial offi-

107 B. Yage, "Cri d'alarme," *Voix du Congolais* no. 35 (February 1949): 67–68.

108 E. R. T. Kanza, "Adieu Matriarchat!," *Voix du Congolais* no. 75 (June 1952): 346.

109 A. Sohier, "Le rôle de la femme dans la famille indigène congolaise," *Mbandaka* (4 October 1947): 1–2.

110 Y. Lammerant, "La femme congolaise et son évolution," *La femme et le Congo* no. 162 (July 1958).

111 N. R. Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Congo. Usumbura's foyer social, 1946–1960," *Signs* 5 (1990): 450.

112 Ibid., 470.

113 On the approach taken by the Liberal colonial minister, see Godding, "La politique indigène"; on his Christian Social equivalent, see J. Vanhove, "Social Service in the Belgian Congo. Present Situation and Future Plans," *Civilisations* 1 (1951).

114 On the *foyers sociaux*, see Hunt, "Domesticity"; Hunt, "Hommes"; Taquet, "'J'attends mon mari'"; D. Waldburger, "House, Home, Health and Hygiene–Social Engineering of Workers in Elisabethville/Lubumbashi (1940s to 1960s)," in *The Politics of Housing in (Post-)Colonial Africa*.

cials and other Europeans, by women Catholic missionaries or female social workers from the metropole. In much the same way as in Asia, in late colonial Africa European women functioned as "agents of colonial and European modernization."[115] While Belgian women in the metropole remained bit players of modernity in the post-war period, in the Belgian Congo their social importance grew through their active participation in the late colonial civilizing mission. As teachers of bourgeois domesticity and gendered orders, European women embodied a hegemonic femininity *vis-à-vis* Congolese women. The female bringer of civilization in the colonies stood in the tradition of bourgeois women's associations, who ran Sunday schools for the daughters of workers in the late nineteenth century and thus did their bit to help raise the cultural level of the working class.[116]

In Belgium *foyers sociaux* had been established as a result of social policy reforms following the worker uprisings of 1886, and since then they had been a stable feature of pillarized social life as female recreational realms. In the decade after the Second World War, the women's associations of the *Mouvement ouvrier chrétien* (MOC) in particular recorded an enormous surge in membership; every other family in Flanders was a member of this branch of Catholic Action, which was closely affiliated with the PSC.[117] The *Ligue ouvrière chrétienne féminine*, as the women's division of the MOC, imparted the idealized conservative notion of a bourgeois married woman, one who is dedicated to child-rearing and household, embodies a Catholic variant of modern domesticity and abstains from the enjoyable leisure pursuits of urban life.[118] As in the metropole, actors within the state and missions in the colonies hoped that disciplining the housewife would help improve the living conditions of the working class and curb its subversive potential.[119]

Accommodating workers and urban residents, eds. K. Rüther et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020); for the first treatment of women's associations in colonial Africa, see K. Little, "Voluntary Associations and Social Mobility among West African Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6 (1972).

115 Frevert and Pernau, "Europa," 9.

116 On the bourgeois women's associations, see Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, 77 and 98.

117 Floré, "Promoting," 84 – 85.

118 Ibid.

119 V. Piette, "Conscience Africaine et inconscience belge," in *Le Manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Élites congolaises et société coloniale. Regards croisés*, ed. N. Tousignant (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2009), 52 – 53; a concise account of the workers' uprisings and the social policy responses is provided by M. T. Bitsch, *Histoire de la Belgique: De l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 2004), 113 – 116.

Fig. 8: Knitting circle organized by European women in Léopoldville.

In the Congo, it was of course only the wives of well-to-do *évolués* who were permitted to visit associations on a regular basis, while all other women were still working in the fields or in the informal sector as they sought to provide for their families.[120] In the view of European women whose concept of a woman was informed by the Belgian post-war ideal of a Catholic nuclear family centered on bourgeois gender roles, African women still had much to learn. In the *foyers sociaux* they were given a "crash course" in the use of a sewing machine, the boil-washing and maintenance of clothing as well as the preparation of meals inside rather than outside the home. They were also instructed in rules of hygiene and child-rearing methods. During pregnancy they were taught how to deal with new-borns; they were supposed to give birth in a hospital, breast-feed and wean their child off breast milk gradually. The curriculum in the *foyers sociaux* was adapted to women's supposed developmental level. As with male *évolués*, the course of instruction assumed several stages of female progress. Thus, only model students attended more advanced courses in household economics, home decoration and the preparation of meals – in model homes featuring a dining room, a full complement of furniture and cutlery.

120 This paragraph draws on Hunt, "Hommes."

Some of the African participants, however, used the knowledge acquired in the *foyers sociaux* in a way that would have displeased their Belgian chaperones. Victorine N'Djoli, wife of a noted *évolué*, who had learned how to use a sewing machine, rose to become the best-known dressmaker in Léopoldville in the 1950s after divorcing her husband. She had her friends model her provocative collections in the capital's trendy bars. For N'Djoli, the notion of the *femme libre*, which denoted notoriety in elite discourse, quite literally signified greater freedom.[121]

In the Congolese press too the uniformly male authors worried over the developmental state of the woman. The woman was a key prestige object for the *évolués*, one that sent out a message about their own degree of civility.[122] Men thus had a strong interest in their wives' education. In 1949, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, composed a popular etiquette manual for the lady *évolué*. It was dedicated to the "developmental problems of the black woman" and dealt with topics also imparted in the *foyers sociaux*. The book gave advice on choice of partner, respectable married life, the maintenance of domestic peace, but also practical tips on clothing, housecleaning and leisure time – if one goes dancing and drinking, to quote one piece of advice, one should do so not to rumba in a bar but at home, to judiciously chosen records.[123] Bolamba constructed the "perfect black woman" as a loyal housewife, the polar opposite of the *femme libre*. Bolamba's book is typical of the paternalistic tone struck by Congolese authors with respect to women. It is no coincidence that the colonial discourse on the imperfection of the male *évolués* found an echo in their references to female developmental deficiencies. For the raising up of the African woman was a task that the colonial state not only delegated to the European women heads of the *foyers sociaux*, but also to the aspiring Congolese elite. But the latter wished to do more than ensure its supremacy within gender relations. The Congolese authors' concern about the development of the woman was always partly a concern for their own respectability and power position within the new gendered order.

121 Interview with Victorine N'Djoli, Kinshasa, 13 August 2010.

122 On marital conflicts arising from the supposed misconduct of *évolués*' wives, see A. Lauro, "'J'ai honneur de porter plainte contre ma femme.' Litiges conjugaux et administration colonial au Congo belge (1930 – 1960)," *CLIO. Histoire, femmes et societies* 33 (2011). The educated African elite in the Gold Coast also presented their wives as "hallmarks of civilization." See Prais, "Imperial Travelers," 59.

123 A. R., Bolamba, *Les problèmes de l'évolution de la femme noire* (Elisabethville: Éditions de l'Essor du Congo, 1949), 77–78.

Interviews with the children of *évolué* families suggest that familiarity with a European lifestyle played a major role in a man's choice of wife. In selecting a partner, many of the interviewees' fathers no longer listened to the family advice but turned to friends and missionaries for advice. One is said to have got to know his wife through an acquaintance in Léopoldville, who recommended her to him as culturally adaptable in light of her primary school education and the domestic science courses she had completed – that she was not from the same region and belonged to a different ethnic group, meanwhile, was of no consequence. Another married the daughter of a Congolese teacher of religion at the behest of his European work colleagues. Due to a lack of schooling, after the wedding she attended the *foyer social* "to learn good manners."[124] Women's *savoir-vivre* was in fact key to their receiving respectful treatment in everyday colonial life: time and again correspondents complained about their "worse half," when, for example, they were refused access to public places due to their wives' inappropriate appearance.[125] Thus, respectable *évolués* believed they had married well if their wives helped confirm their standing as "perfected blacks."

The ideal image of the nuclear family was completed by children. They too showcased a civilized life while having notions of civility projected onto them. In the elite newspapers, Congolese authors were unanimous in promoting the strict education typical of mission schools, which emphasized discipline, culture and propriety. The education reform of 1948 under a Christian Social colonial minister met the vernacular elite's demands for better educational opportunities only to a limited degree. The much sought-after places in the new secondary schools, which held out the prospect of a higher education entrance qualification after six years, were as scarce as those in the gender-segregated missionary boarding schools. The education reform had opted not to provide secondary schools for girls and merely established household management schools for the "children of *évolués* or their later partners" in a few urban centres. These acquainted them with a way of life appropriate to the vernacular elite.[126] While the expansion of these educational institutions progressed gradually in the early 1950s,[127] some *évolués* looked around for alternatives to the education system

124 Interviews with relatives of office workers (anonymized in this case), Kinshasa, August 2010.

125 Katoto, "L'habit," 761–762.

126 Congo belge, Service de l'Enseignement, *Organisation de l'enseignement libre subsidié pour indigènes avec le concours des Sociétés de Missions chrétiennes. Disposition générales* (Léopoldville: 1948), 29.

127 A.-R. Bolamba, "A propos des Internats pour des enfants Congolais," *Voix du Congolais* no. 60 (March 1951): 129–130.

of the Belgian Congo. Well-to-do and education-conscious residents of Léopoldville often sent their children to schools in neighbouring Brazzaville.[128]

After 1945 the Catholic missions in particular expanded recreational opportunities for children and adolescents in order to provide extramural education and disciplining.[129] These programmes were still institutionally embedded in the *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* (JOC), a youth organization founded in Brussels in 1923 and active across the world, which aimed to furnish young people with a "school of life."[130] In Africa too the JOC expected organized leisure activities for youths to provide an effective prophylactic against a lack of moral direction and susceptibility to communist ideas – the youth organizations in the socialist countries served as cautionary cases.[131] In post-war Belgium, the JOC was building on its already preeminent position within organized recreational services for young people.[132] In the Belgian Congo it focussed its efforts mainly on sports clubs and boy scout groups. In the colonies these organizational forms served as instruments of the civilizing mission, through which missionaries sought to impress upon young people, in their free time, their notions of a moral way of life, hygiene and discipline. It was above all the educated elite in many African colonies that valued this movement as a means of imparting European values, and they expected it to give their children an educational advantage.[133] In the Belgian Congo several branches of the JOC were established in the 1950s. Due to their limited resources, however, they often had no more than two dozen members,[134] most of them from *évolué* families.

The offspring of *évolué* families stood out above all else through their high level of education.[135] Fathers' great interest in a good education for their children is understandable, given that they themselves had experienced school attendance as the route to a professional career. No surprise, then, that the father's duty to educate his children was an integral component of elite discourse.

128 Interview with relatives of an office worker (anonymized in this case), Kinshasa, August 2010.

129 S. Tilman, "L'implantation du scoutisme au congo belge," in *Itinéraires croisés de la modernité Congo belge (1920 – 1950)*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001); Van Rompaey, "The Development," 193 – 213.

130 Letter from JOC to Georges Six, provincial bishop of Léopoldville, 4 April 1950, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4.

131 Ibid.

132 Conway, *Sorrows*, 213 – 215.

133 T. H. Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

134 Pasquier, *La jeunesse*, 106.

135 Interview with Anselme Mavuela, Kinshasa, 31 August 2010.

Here the family was ascribed the role of earliest and most intimate locus of the civilizing mission. Etienne Ngandu, author of the *évolué* memorandum of 1944, interpreted family as the elite's didactic workshop of the future: "While the school educates, the family forms the character of all those who will be our chiefs, priests and leaders of tomorrow."[136] To this day, children of *Voix du Congolais* staff recall reading with their fathers, who helped them with homework and talked to them exclusively in French, while using a vernacular language with their mothers.[137] The paternalism of elite formation was reflected in the paternalism of child-rearing. Antoine-Marie Mobé, for example, had his oldest son sweep the front yard, signed him up with the boy scouts and took him along to association meetings, where he sometimes played with the children of Europeans. He could not recall having interacted with Congolese children of the same age in the neighbourhood: as the child of an *évolué*, he was given to a "superiority complex"[138] *vis-à-vis* such children.

Domesticity and perfect homes

The disciplining of the *évolué* family did not stop at the front door. Through the standardization and stabilization of the residential situation in the cities, the colonial state sought to strengthen the nuclear family. Habitats – to draw loosely on Pierre Bourdieu – were meant to rub off on habitus.[139] In the form of the *Office des Cités Africaines* (OCA), in 1952 the Colonial Ministry created a public enterprise for house-building and urban development, which constructed 40,000 houses within eight years.[140] In the media the OCA propagated the construction of dwellings of durable material and divided into rooms shaped by European notions of residential culture: living room, dining room, bedroom for the married

136 E. Ngandu, "L'école instruit mais la famille forme le caractère," *Voix du Congolais* no. 27 (June 1948): 245.

137 According to the son of Antoine-Marie Mobé and the daughter of Antoine-Roger Bolamba. Interview with Elisabeth Bolamba, Kinshasa, 30 August 2010; interview with Jean de la Croix Mobé, Kinshasa, 31 August 2010.

138 Ibid.

139 P. Bourdieu, "Site Effects," in *The Weight of the World. Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, ed. P. Bourdieu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 128.

140 On the OCA, see F. De Boeck and M.-F. Plissard, *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004); B. De Demeulder, "OCA (Office des cités africaines, 1952–1960)," in *ArchiAfrika Conference Proceedings: Modern Architecture in East Africa around Independence* (Dar es Salaam: 2005); M. Gemoets et al., eds., *Kinshasa. Architecture et paysage urbains* (Paris: Somogy Editions, 2010), 88.

couple and children's rooms. Further, it offered the more well-to-do Congolese "accommodation for developed natives"[141] for purchase with the help of special loans. In much the same way as in post-war Belgium, where the state offered support to workers wishing to acquire their own home,[142] in the colony too the goal was to awaken an appreciation for property among members of the vernacular elite.[143] In order to apply for a loan, introduced by Christian Social colonial minister Pierre Wigny as a component of the Ten-Year Plan in 1949,[144] it was essential to prove one's monogamous marriage and practice of the Christian faith.[145] Homes for *évolués* came in a number of models – a chimney on the roof, in this tropical climate, was not so much a means of combating the cold as an expression in stone of advanced assimilation to European visions of bourgeois culture.[146] Placing photographs of the houses of European residents and *évolués* side by side, one is struck by a certain similarity, though the proportions and furnishings of Europeans' "ideal colonial house"[147] evince greater wealth. But the *évolués*' homes stand out when compared with the simple dwellings for the Congolese workers, which were constructed, on a massive scale, by both state agencies and business enterprises.[148] The colonial distinction on which the social hierarchy rested was maintained in residential environments.

Through the new housing estates constructed after the Second World War in many prosperous urban centres, the colonial state met the demands of Congolese who were unhappy with their living situation. In a report from Coquilhatville, which was sent to the *Voix du Congolais* but not published, one of them called for state aid for the construction of a new African quarter. The heat, he explained, made a night in the house virtually unbearable, impairing concentration at work; the inevitable overcrowding of homes made it impossible to receive visitors; and the noise of the neighbourhood prevented residents from reading

141 To cite the title of a construction drawing for a residential building in Léopoldville's African quarter; Ibid., 90.

142 Floré, "Promoting," 87.

143 J. Lagae, "Le territoire urbain de Kinshasa: patchwork et palimpseste," in *Kinshasa. Architecture et paysage urbains*, eds. B. Gemoets et al. (Paris: Somogy Editions, 2010), 18 – 19.

144 Stenmans and Charlier, "Pierre Wigny."

145 Gondola, *Tropical*, 153.

146 On these houses, see De Demeulder, "OCA."

147 J. Lagae, "In Search of a 'comme chez soi.' The Ideal Colonial House in Congo (1885 – 1960)," in *Itinéraires croisés de la modernité Congo belge (1920 – 1950)*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

148 Gemoets, *Kinshasa*, 86.

and pursuing "intellectual work."[149] The author also complained about the financial problems of those starting out in their careers, who could barely afford to buy appropriate furniture for their home, thus highlighting the living room as a site representative of social status. It was the showcase for the prevailing styles of furnishing, concepts of family, forms of sociability and material belongings.[150]

According to Congolese historian Jean-Marie Mutamba-Makombo, who himself grew up in an *évolué* household, in the Belgian Congo the living room served as a "measure of residents' degree of civilization."[151] The living room's furnishings and decor were to some extent standardized and were a reflection of bourgeois culture. Ornaments and portraits of the Belgian king or of the colonial state's officials, often excerpted from newspapers, adorned its walls. Standard furniture included upholstered armchairs and a side table with a crocheted cover featuring a vase of flowers, radio and paraffin lamp. The similarities in furnishing style were due on the one hand to the omnipresence of colonial residential settings in Congolese newspapers and on the other to the presence of decorative techniques on the curriculum of the *foyers sociaux*.[152] The so-called *salon*, the parlour or living room, was an intermediate social space, as much a site of "public representation" as of "private intimacy."[153] Here the man of the house would become engrossed in reading and receive visits from friends and work colleagues. It was quite common for elite actors to monitor whether standards of domesticity were being maintained in the African districts. The female heads of the *foyers sociaux* sometimes inspected their students' homes. In some places, *chefs de cité* carried out home inspections and lauded the most commendable dwellings.[154] The cult of the living room also found public expression in competitions held across the colony to identify the most beautifully furnished homes. The photos of the winners, which appeared in newspapers, entered into the imagery used to advertise consumer products that were the hallmark of an exem-

149 Letter from Paul Ifufa to the territorial administrator in Coquilhatville, 5 April 1945, AA/GG/10384.

150 On the history and significance of living rooms, see K. Hausen, "Das Wohnzimmer," in *Orte des Alltags. Miniaturen aus der europäischen Kulturgeschichte*, ed. H.-G. Haupt (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1994); H. P. Hahn, "Von der Ethnographie des Wohnzimmers – zur 'Topographie des Zufalls,'" in *Die Sprache der Dinge. Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven auf die materielle Kultur*, eds. E. Tietmeyer et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2010).

151 Mutamba-Makombo, "Im Salon," 156.

152 Hunt, "Hommes," 56.

153 Hausen, "Das Wohnzimmer," 139.

154 Information provided by Jean Lema, whose father was in charge of the workers' settlement established by transport firm Otraco in Léopoldville as *chef de cité*; interview with Jean Lema, Kinshasa, 13 August 2010. On the *chefs de cité*, see Young, *Politics*, 108.

plary *évolué*. These photos served to disseminate in the media an ideal of bourgeois culture and domesticity centred on the nuclear family.[155] Educating people for "good living" (in the sense of residing) was a phenomenon also evident in Belgian post-war society, where women's associations run by the MOC held beautiful home contests to propagate bourgeois ways of life and Catholic domesticity.[156]

As with clothing, Congolese authors writing for elite newspapers also excoriated what they perceived as hyperbolic approaches to home decor. Newspaper articles got worked up about the fact that some people painted their house fronts in colourful tones, writing their name or arithmetic problems on them, or covered interior walls with newspaper excerpts devoid of religious, patriotic or artistic value.[157] Like the women's associations of the MOC, the exemplary *évolués* extolled modesty as a Christian value and put "outlandish" decor down to moral deficiencies.[158]

In metropole and colony, the private home was intended to achieve the "spatial isolation of the [...] nuclear family."[159] While in Belgium a home of one's own was meant to provide protection from the modern temptations of the outside world, in the Congo it also represented a refuge for the nuclear family from the traditional demands of the extended family, which was regarded as a threat to the maintenance of the new gender order. After 1945, the culture of domesticity served both as a civilizing instrument for the formation of a Congolese elite and as a means of raising the moral and cultural level of the Belgian working class.[160] In the Belgian Congo, it was the woman of the house who became

155 The findings of ethnographic studies carried out in the former Belgian Congo after independence suggest that these *petit bourgeois* residential worlds enduringly shaped the taste in furnishings of the Congolese. See J. Fabian, "Popular Culture in Africa. Findings and Conjectures," *Africa* 48 (1978): 318 – 319; P. Lambertz, *Seekers and Things: Spiritual Movements and Aesthetic Difference in Kinshasa* (New York: Berghahn, 2018), 98 – 100; B. Plankensteiner, "Wo die Bilder wohnen. Eine Ethnographie des Wohnzimmers und Wandschmucks im urbanen Kongo," in *An-Sichten. Malerei aus dem Kongo, 1990 – 2000*, eds. B. Plankensteiner and B. Jewsiewicki (Vienna: Springer, 2001).

156 Floré, "Promoting," 88 – 89; T. Van Osselaer, "Religion, Family and Domesticity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. An Introduction," in *Christian Homes. Religion, Family and Domesticity in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. T. Van Osselaer and P. Pasture (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014).

157 Lomboto, "Pour un peu," 18 – 19.

158 On the ideology of the good home in post-war Belgium, see Floré, "Promoting," 90 – 91.

159 W. Kaschuba, "Das Einfamilienhaus. Zwischen Traum und Trauma?" *archithese* 37, no. 3 (2007): 19.

160 On domesticity in colonial Africa, see K. T. Hansen, "Introduction. Domesticity in Africa," in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. K. T. Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University

the main actor required to furnish proof of a home that met the high standards highlighted in the idealized *évolué* discourse.

Responsible consumption and saving money

A debate flared up in the Belgian Congo's elite newspapers on approaches to money and the question of how the propagandized family life of the "true" *évolué* ought to be financed. To the same degree that authors in the relevant newspapers ascribed wastefulness to the snob, they urged all those who saw themselves as part of an elite to deal with money responsibly. One correspondent contributing to the *Voix du Congolais*, from Luebo in Kasai province, published a piece on the major differences between stinginess, saving and squandering: "Our development or our progress [...] results solely from the individual work done by all Congolese and the way in which they use the income from their work."[161] Other authors endorsed his view that one must refrain from spending large amounts of money on clothing, alcohol and other "trifles."[162] The male authors also warned of wives' excessive material demands. Some women went so far as to insist that their bike must be a Raleigh. They were suspected of misappropriating housekeeping money for jewellery and clothing, which they donned for visits to bars while their husbands were away from home.[163]

The new affluence aroused covetous glances. In Stanleyville concerns were raised that urban wage labourers risked sinking into poverty because distant family members had moved in with and were being kept by them. Calling on the colonial administration to crack down on these "parasitical stays" by issuing fewer travel permits, one author underlined the need to protect the new model of the self-contained nuclear family.[164] Colonial official Emmanuel Capelle, who was responsible for Léopoldville's African quarter, also warned of the financial consequences of relatives' long-term stays. He cited the case of an office assistant who not only provided for his wife and children but for twelve additional indi-

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Press, 1992); Comaroff and Comaroff, "Home-Made"; on the Belgian case, see Floré, "Promoting," 85–86.

161 J. D. Moukeba, "Economie et Gaspillage," *Voix du Congolais* no. 53 (August 1950): 458.

162 A.-M. Mobé, "A propos des devoirs des évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 34 (January 1949): 15.

163 M. Landu, "Sachons gérer notre avoir," *Voix du Congolais* no. 72 (March 1952): 148.

164 J.-P. Dubuka, "Le Blanc ignore encore l'âme du Noir et la provenance de sa pauvreté," *Voix du Congolais* no. 22 (January 1948): 15.

viduals.[165] The fruits of wage labour ought to go to the benefit of the nuclear family. Authors who had been praised as exemplary, such as Antoine-Marie Mobé, considered meeting the financial needs of the nuclear family one of the *évolué*'s core duties.[166]

The material benefits of saving and its moral desirability were commended to readers of elite newspapers by means of photographs and captions. In one image, a Congolese homeowner could be seen on an extensive property, which he had bought after years of saving.[167] A picture of a group of children was accompanied by the following explanation: "These well-nourished and neatly dressed children belong to respectable and thrifty households."[168]

In newspapers, the Congolese elite propagated the view that consumer culture was a hard-earned achievement: the result of working and saving. Calls for responsible saving thus drowned out scattered appeals for pay rises for Congolese workers.[169] Through didactic articles, Congolese authors sought to oppose the racist claim that an African merely lives from day to day and is incapable of planning ahead.[170] They countered this notion, among other things, by highlighting the widespread tradition of the *likelemba*. These were self-organized savings associations run by a group of friends that helped out members facing major expenditure on such things as weddings, illnesses and funerals.[171]

To promote and modernize the culture of saving, in 1950 the Colonial Ministry, under the leadership of the PSC, established a Savings Bank for Congolese customers, which was run by the *Caisse Générale d'Épargne et de la Retraite de Belgique*.[172] Once again, this involved a transfer of social reforms, through which Belgian policy in the metropole had sought to moralize the working class and enhance its welfare since the 1870s.[173] In the inter-war period there was a large number of savings banks in Belgium serving the highly developed Belgian

165 Capelle, *La Cité*, 62 – 65.
166 Mobé, "A propos des devoirs," 15.
167 Image in A.-M. Mobé, "Beaucoup d'argent gâte les noirs," *Voix du Congolais* no. 55 (October 1950): 583.
168 Image in Landu, "Sachons," 149.
169 Mobé, "Beaucoup d'argent," 582.
170 Mobé, "A propos des devoirs," 12 – 15.
171 Dubuka, "Le Blanc," 15; A.-R. Bolamba, "Une caisse d'Epargne Congolaise," *Voix du Congolais* no. 51 (June 1950): 323.
172 Ibid.
173 E. Gubin and J.-P. Nandrin, *La Belgique libérale et bourgeoise (1846 – 1878)* (Brussels: Complexe, 2010), 137 – 138.

culture of saving.[174] In order to stimulate a saving mentality in the colony as well and address new Congolese customers in a targeted way, the Savings Bank announced a competition to create a poster, with prize money totalling 5,000 francs.[175] The winning posters symbolize the ambivalence of saving, the sacrifice and promise it entails. The winner of the first prize shows a hand pouring the contents of a bowl of water into a bulbous calabash, which suggests a link between the mounting contributions to one's savings book and the practice, common throughout much of the territory, of filling the water tank every day to help ensure a supply during times of need.[176] The second-placed poster shows a village scene. A man wearing a shirt is pushing his bicycle in front of a reed-covered house. Next to him stands a sewing machine, while nearby a half-naked child stares in amazement as a man drops a coin into a box marked *Caisse d'Épargne*.[177] He who saves resolutely, as we might sum up the poster's message, can afford to buy those products serving as "symbolic markers of *évolué* status."[178] For to be taken seriously as an *évolué*, recalls Antoine-Marie Mobé's son with respect to family possessions, the minimum requirements were a bicycle, sewing machine and radio.[179]

By the end of 1951, just under 39,000 savings books existed in the Belgian Congo containing an average sum of 3,300 francs, roughly equivalent to one and a half times the monthly wage of a Congolese employed in the administrative system.[180] In addition to lack of financial resources, other consumption priorities and saving habits, wider dissemination of the savings books was impeded by a certain scepticism felt by many Congolese towards the books themselves. In 1953, the *chef de la cité indigène* reported to the territorial administrator in Léo-

174 G. Vanthemsche, "De Belgische spaarbanken in België tijdens de Interbellum," in *De Belgische Spaarbanken. Geschiedenis, recht, economische functie en instellingen*, ed. Belgische Spaarbankevereiniging (Tielt: Lanoo, 1986).

175 "Le Secrétaire du Jury, Concours organisé par la Caisse d'Epargne du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi," *Voix du Congolais* no. 64 (July 1951): 395–396; "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 65 (August 1951): 457–458. The Congolese Savings Bank was also promoted by other newspapers such as the *Croix du Congo* and *Nos Images*.

176 Image in *Voix du Congolais* no. 69 (December 1951): 698.

177 Image in *Voix du Congolais* no. 75 (June 1952): 358.

178 Hunt, "Letter-Writing," 203.

179 Interview with Jean de la Croix Mobé, Kinshasa, 1 September 2010.

180 Figures drawn from statistics in the *Voix du Congolais*, though no information was provided on how the data was collected or its source. See statistics accompanying the article by Landu, "Sachons," 149.

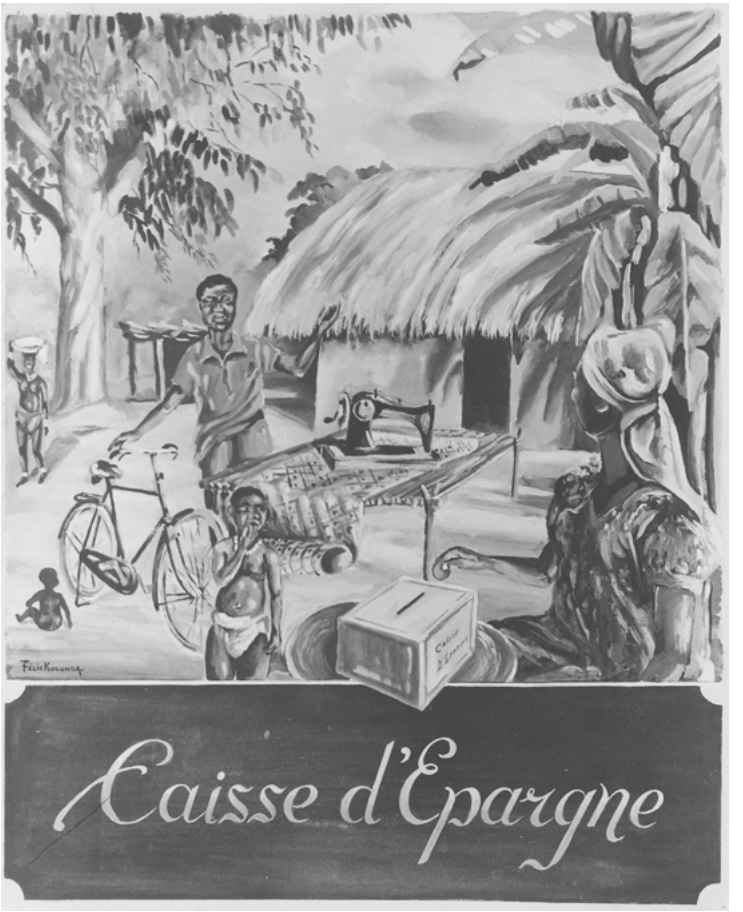

Fig. 9: The second-placed poster by Félix Kolonga.

poldville rumours that the money paid into the savings accounts ended up in the hands of the "European settlers," paying for their luxurious homes and cars.[181]

It comes as no surprise that, according to this report, "false" *évolués* were responsible for this malicious gossip, namely a group of well-heeled men and office workers, whose *Élégance* club held sumptuous parties featuring alcohol and women in well-known dance bars.[182] While the informer, through his de-

181 Letter to *chef de la cité indigène* in Léopoldville, 22 July 1953, AA/GG/19596.
182 Ibid.

mand for action against these deviants and disturbers of the peace, assured the colonial administration of his own uprightness, this incident indicates that even those who were categorized as members of the Congolese elite in light of their jobs could be devotees of a leisure pursuit viewed as immoral. Through processes of assimilation occurring in the context of everyday life, cultural figures diametrically opposed to one another in elite discourse could be combined in a single person. The *évolués*' "situational self"[183] allowed them to be a "perfected African" during the day and a "snob" at night.

After 1945, the representations of "false" and "real" *évolués* omnipresent in the Congolese media raised great expectations. For the colonial state expected elite formation to produce loyal, diligent and morally exemplary partners, with whose help the Congo of tomorrow could be constructed. The "perfected black" was envisaged as a colonial intermediary, one that would influence culturally not only his own family but the masses as well, while also supporting the latter's development.[184] From this perspective, the civilizing mission was now partly the responsibility of the new vernacular elite as an extension of the colonial state.

Educated Congolese hoped that elite formation and an enhanced legal status would give them greater opportunities for social advancement and result in improved living conditions. In addition, one of the main benefits *évolués* wished to attain was enhanced respectability, something that African society in the colonial situation was generally denied; precisely because of this, it was a much sought-after good for those who interacted with European actors on a daily basis. Thus, the congruence between elite discourse and that of the European actors involved in colonial subject formation is partly due to the strategy pursued by Congolese of demanding social recognition in light of their cultural adaptation to notions of European civility. In view of the elite member's efforts to assim-

183 The concept of the "situational self" is used in a study on the new post-Soviet elite, emphasizing that an individual, "depending on the context and situation, alters his behavioral codes and roles and highlights or conceals different aspects of his self"; A. Vonderau, "Enterprising self. Neue soziale Differenzierung und kulturelle Selbstdeutungen der Wirtschaftselite in Litauen," in *European Economic Elites. Between a New Spirit of Capitalism and the Erosion of State Socialism*, eds. F. Sattler and C. Boyer (Berlin: Duncker & Homblot, 2009), 453.

184 The articles in the *Voix du Congolais* on the African elite's efforts to help the uneducated masses contradict the dichotomous interpretation of the colonial public sphere advanced by Peter P. Ekeh. He argues that the "bourgeois public sphere" in the African colonies represented a space free of morals and that moral obligations to one's fellow human beings were articulated solely in the "primordial public sphere"; P. P. Ekeh, "Colonialisms and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 (1975).

ilate, he gained a reputation as a "*mundele ndombe*,"[185] that is, a 'black white'[186] who imitated the European in every possible way.

For the *évolués*, the self-imposed bourgeoisification, the attempt to become more Belgian than the Belgians, became the "black man's burden."[187] For while the discourse of perfectibility certainly provided arguments justifying the attainment of legal distinction, a tremendous burden of proof lay on the prospective elite. When it came to the awarding of status, the difference between is and ought culminated in a rigorous selection procedure governed by distrust. We have seen several examples of the discrepancies between what was expected of the elite and how its members actually behaved. The ideal-typical division between bourgeoisified and snobbish *évolués* was made in light of attributes, lifestyle and self-presentation, as well as by means of social and cultural practices that were considered civilized in colonial discourse and were meant to distinguish the new Congolese elite. Seen from the perspective of the *évolués*' lifeworld, the late colonial practice of "social engineering," a holistic process of intervention in intimate and quotidian areas of life, seems totalistic in its aspirations but weak in its results. The intensive efforts made to create an elite through cultural bourgeoisification provided Congolese actors with a platform for the negotiation of social status, an arena in which moral values, consumption preferences, ideas about gender, acts of self-presentation and strategies for attaining distinction collided in a wide range of ways. Nowhere was this more apparent than in one of the key sites of elite formation, one the colonial state increasingly fostered after 1945 in order to ensure the control and disciplining of Congolese in their free time: associations.

185 Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 94.

186 This term was used widely in colonial Africa. In Tanganyika, for example, people referred to *wazungu weusi*; Eckert, *Herrschen*, 250.

187 This phrase, a variant on the histrionic self-description of European colonialism as the "white man's burden," is an allusion to the title of Davidson's book: B. Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden. Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (London: James Currey, 1992).

Associations and sociability between is and ought (1944–1953)

The genesis and control of Congolese associations

During his trip through the Congo Free State in 1899, the mayor of Brussels lamented the lack of associations. According to him, European colonial society required protected social spaces if its members were to come together in ways appropriate to their social status and cultivate bourgeois manners even under adverse circumstances.[1] Over the course of time the association developed into Europeans' most important form of sociability in the Congo. Beginning in the 1920s, however, Congolese too, primarily graduates of mission schools, started to organize themselves into associations. In the colonial situation, the practices and forms of association-based sociability were subject to a complex transformation.[2] The association culture of Congolese differed from that which arose in the eighteenth century along with the European and US-American bourgeoisies, especially in its relationship to political and religious authorities. While associations in the trans-Atlantic world were distinguished by a certain autonomy,[3] in the Belgian Congo they were closely tied to the institutions of state and church and were subject to their patronage and control.

It is no coincidence that the colonial state's involvement in African associations began in the mid-1940s. During the war years, the colonial administration had taken wary note of the growth of informal associations in the cities, though without doing anything about it. The authorities overlooked the fact that these were often mutual aid societies established by new city dwellers, organized based on their places of origin, whose members sought to help each other cope with the challenges of everyday city life.[4] In the eyes of the authorities, these bodies were "hierarchical sects,"[5] which they suspected of being potential hotbeds of messianic and subversive movements. These free associations were

1 Lauro and Piette, "Le Congo Belge," 134.

2 See S.-L. Hoffmann, "Colonial Civil Society," *De Negentiende Eeuw* 32 (2008): 146.

3 S.-L. Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit und Demokratie. Vereine und zivile Gesellschaft im transnationalen Vergleich 1750–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 102–105.

4 These mutual aid societies were a widespread phenomenon in colonial Africa. See Little, "Voluntary Associations"; K. Little, *West African Urbanization. A Study of Voluntary Associations and Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 47–58; Eckert, "Wohlfahrtsmix," 102.

5 Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 390.

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commonly understood as a form of "political protest against the prevailing order and the Belgian administration."[6] This perspective became particularly popular after secret groups of *évolués* were suspected of being behind the soldiers' uprisings in Luluabourg in the spring of 1944.

From then on, the colonial state began to expedite the foundation of associations for *évolués* so as to maintain control over them. The colonial planners had something quite different in mind than the sociability described by French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville, who regarded the self-improvement practised, and the alliances forged, by association members as facilitative of democracy and a means of preventing despotic political systems.[7] In the Belgian Congo associations were supposed to be classrooms of civilized social intercourse, a kind of never-ending preparatory course for a political emancipation to come in the distant future. For the colonial state, the associations were immediately useful as a mechanism of control and domination within elite-making policy. Though sociability and the public sphere were intertwined in the Belgian Congo, much as in eighteenth-century European associations,[8] the vernacular elite did not "meet itself" in associations.[9] For as yet the elite was, or the *évolués* were, chiefly an imagined community, which subsequently took shape through the associations – a shape, however, that had to jibe with the colonial authorities' desires. Certainly, periodicals had attempted to construct a collective *évolué* identity. And in the name of the *évolués*, Congolese authors in these publications had communicated interests and demands to the colonial state that overarched the group's social heterogeneity. The first contours of a process of "cultural socialization"[10] among *évolués* had thus undoubtedly begun to emerge in the media. Yet a de-

6 A. Rubbens, "Perspective démocratique au Congo Belge," *La Revue Nouvelle* 6 (1947). See Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 390.

7 On Tocqueville's view of sociability, see Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit*, 7–15.

8 Ibid., 27.

9 This is an allusion to the title of an essay by L. Hölscher that combines the analysis of periodicals and associations: L. Hölscher, "Die Öffentlichkeit begegnet sich selbst. Zur Struktur öffentlichen Redens im 18. Jahrhundert zwischen Diskurs- und Sozialgeschichte," in *Öffentlichkeit im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. H.-W. Jäger (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1997).

10 On the concept of cultural socialization, see Hettling, *Bürgerlichkeit als kulturelles System*, 15–17. Drawing on the work of Rainer M. Lepsius, who saw "forms of socialization emerging from the tension between economic interests and conceptions of order," Hettling interprets bourgeois culture first and foremost as a particular way of interpreting the world; ibid., 17. Within the framework of research on bourgeois culture, Hettling is joined by Lässig in gearing the concept of socialization, introduced into the discipline of history by Lepsius – and ultimately rooted in the work of Georg Simmel and Max Weber – towards more cultural processes and forms; ibid.; Lässig, *Jüdische Wege*, 21–22.

cleared set of common interests and a similar social situation did not necessarily lead to the formation of communities that felt related to one another. *Évolués* were not all equal. The *topoi* "*évolués*" and "African elite" subsumed a heterogenous social formation, united chiefly in its ambivalent relationship to the European population: it took its cultural lead from this social group, but the latter kept its distance through enduring practices of distinction. If we wish to know whether the *évolués* saw themselves as a community beyond media discourses, we have to address processes of communitization.[11]

By what means did the colonial state foster the Congolese associations? How were they structured? Several administrative levels of the hierarchically organized colonial state were involved in the founding wave of associations, which surged across the territory from 1944 onwards. In parallel to the state-sponsored periodicals such as the *Voix du Congolais*, the General Government took steps to organize the *évolués*' leisure time. During the war, the scale of association life had still been highly dependent on the initiative of the local colonial administration. The provincial governors exchanged notes by post on the activities, structure and constitutions of the few existing associations, which had been initiated by representatives of the colonial state.[12] After the war and as an aspect of elite-making policy, however, the know-how needed to run associations spread via periodicals. By publishing reports and minutes of meetings, they provided a blueprint for new associations.

After taking office as colonial minister in the summer of 1945, Liberal Robert Godding had created a subdivision of the *Section de l'Information pour Indigènes* within the General Government in Léopoldville to promote associations for the Congolese elite.[13] In October 1945, the General Government then made sure the provincial governors grasped the objectives of the new association policy: "It will surely be quite possible to encourage the learning circles for *évolués*

11 This is not the right place to deal with the differences between socialization and communitization or their conceptual history. For a discussion of this topic with reference to research on the bourgeoisie, see M. Hettling, *Politische Bürgerlichkeit: der Bürger zwischen Individualität und Vergesellschaftung in Deutschland und in der Schweiz von 1860 bis 1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 14–17; for a brief treatment, see Schulz, *Lebenswelt*, 72–75.

12 In December 1944, for example, the district commissioner in Elisabethville, responding to a request from the provincial governor, received copies of all the documents concerning the *évolué* association in Stanleyville from the local district commissioner; letter from district commissioner in Elisabethville to district commissioner in Stanleyville, 21 December 1944, AA/GG/6339.

13 Brausch, *Belgian Administration*, 66.

[...], to generate an optimistic and loyal attitude among our *évolués*, which would prompt a sympathetic reaction from the Europeans."[14]

To provide targeted support for associations, in 1946 the colonial government allocated an annual budget of 500,000 francs to each province, with the redistribution of funds to the various districts being left to the discretion of the provincial governors.[15] At times the funding was in place before there was anyone to receive it, because in many places associations had yet to be established. The provincial governors delegated this task to the district commissioners and territorial officials subordinate to them. In much the same way as with the periodicals for the vernacular elite, the fostering of associations came under the remit of the local colonial officials. They had to attract members from among the local *évolué* milieu, and, in collaboration with them, draw up a set of rules, come up with a name and find a place for meetings. These officials were the associations' patrons and they appointed advisers from among the European population. This was a considerable and time-consuming task, which the local colonial officials took on with varying degrees of engagement, whether due to lack of time or unwillingness.[16]

By the late 1940s a network of associations had already spread across the colony; it had been initiated not just by the colonial state but also by missions, firms and private European individuals. The missions' lead role in the establishment of Congolese associations reveals the national specificity of Belgium's colonial rule. Catholic organizations dominated even in the lively associational landscape of the metropole, which laid the ground for the pillarization of Belgian society.[17] There was, however, no transfer of party-affiliated associations to the colony. The colonial government envisaged associations as an apolitical space in which *évolués* were to be indoctrinated and supervised by European advisers. If we compare the foundation of elite associations in the Belgian Congo, which intensified from 1945 onwards, with the Gold Coast under British rule, what stands out is that in the latter the many debating and "self-improvement"

14 Governor general, quoted in a letter from the provincial governor in Elisabethville to the district commissioner of Katanga, 29 October 1945, AA/GG/6339.

15 Ibid.

16 When, for example, one territorial official failed to comply quickly enough with the district commissioner's instruction to establish an association, within three months the latter started up the *Leopold II – Travail et Progrès Association*; letters from the district commissioner in Elisabethville to the territorial administrator in Elisabethville, 31 October 1945 and 14 December 1945, AA/GG/6339.

17 On Belgium's associational culture, see M. Reynebeau, *Histoire belge: 1830 – 2005* (Brussels: Racine, 2005).

clubs serving educated Africans, which had been active since the 1880s, had already given way to other forms of organization. In particular, the political parties that emerged in the wake of Britain's post-war reforms had superseded the associations.[18] Similar developments occurred in French African colonies, though colonial administrations in AEF, for example, sought to maintain their influence on the educated elite through state-guided education programmes with the help of associations, social centres and media.[19]

The total number of *évolué* associations in the Belgian Congo grew rapidly in the decade after the war: from 113 associations with 5,609 members in 1946 to 593 associations with 33,472 members in 1950. Eight years later 114,496 Congolese were organized into 2,078 associations. In the cities especially there was a large number of *évolués* associations, with one in ten to be found in Léopoldville in the mid-1950s.[20] But these associations were also popular in smaller settlements and remote villages. In the administrative records, meanwhile, the "*évolués* circles" were categorized by their focus on entertainment, sport or further education. Of the 490 "*évolués* circles" officially registered in 1948, with their 25,014 members, just one quarter were classified as "learning circles," with a total membership of 5,000. By 1955, the number of these learning circles had grown to 204 associations with a total of 14,878 members.[21] But this classification should not obscure the fact that the associations frequently offered a mixed programme and were similar in their goals and activities, regardless of whether their patrons were the colonial administration, missions or private individuals. The "colonial bloc," consisting of representatives of economy, state and church, and thus all those institutions that dealt with or employed *évolués*, was involved in organized elite sociability.[22] In the context of developmental colonialism the number of Congolese clerks in particular grew in firms and the administrative system, as evident in the fact that in late 1957 a third of associations were supervised by colonial officials, one in five by missionaries and half by private individuals, chiefly businessmen and other employers.

What can we say about the structure, activities and objectives of the associations, and about the colonial state's attempts to influence them? When it comes to their basic concept and hierarchical structure, the bureaucratic associations in

18 On associations in the Gold Coast, see Newell, *Game of Life*; Newell, "Territory of Elites."
19 A. Chemain-Degrange and R. Chemain, *Panorama critique de la littérature congolaise contemporaine* (Paris: Editions Présence Africaine, 2000), 26–34.
20 Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 390–391.
21 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 53.
22 Vellut, "Hégémonies."

the Belgian Congo resembled their European counterparts.[23] They had to register officially and adopt a constitution as well as setting out their objectives, access criteria, arrangements for electing the committee, membership fees and their use, forms of sanction and in some cases the *modus operandi* of the affiliated library or bar. In addition, the constitution clarified not only when and how often meetings were held but also how they were supposed to proceed. They usually began with a reading of the minutes of the last meeting; other typical activities included the holding of talks and an associated discussion, preparing for the next meeting and concluding the evening with board games. The committee, re-elected at regular intervals, included several positions: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, librarian and a "special representative for parties."[24]

The admission criteria were also laid down in the constitution but varied depending on the association. All former mission school pupils were automatically and exclusively members of their associations; some associations catered to members of particular occupational groups or to those employed in specific firms. Often, membership was open to all *évolués* capable of paying the monthly fees. In general, associations were supposed to fund themselves through fee-based membership. In some places, constitutions stipulated that membership was solely open to *évolués*. It is certainly no exception, for example, that the constitution of the *Association des Évolués de Stanleyville* (AES) prohibited the so-called Coastmen from joining. Due to their education, these anglophone immigrants from West Africa, most of whom were in the employ of British firms, represented major competition for the local population when it came to the much sought-after jobs in the administration.[25] Hence, the constitution of the AES prevented the encounter between the Coastmen and the Congolese from becoming

23 On the associational bureaucracy in Europe, see A. M. Banti, "Der Verein," in *Orte des Alltags. Miniaturen aus der europäischen Kulturgeschichte*, ed. H.-G. Haupt (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1994), 108.

24 Constitutions of this kind were regularly published in the *Voix du Congolais*. My remarks here are based on the example of the constitution of the *Cercle Van Gele* in Libenge; Statuts, *Cercle Van Gele* de Libenge, 9 April 1953, AA/GG/6372.

25 There is a lack of scholarship on the Coastmen of the Belgian Congo, though they are an extremely interesting group of actors for a colonial history focussed on inter-imperial transfers. On their influence, see Lauro, "Politiques," 363. The role of the Coastmen is comparable with that of the "Asian clerks" in British colonies such as Tanganyika. See Eckert, *Herrschen*, 80. On the transnational careers of African employees of the United Africa Company, see D. Van den Bersselaar, "'Doorway to Success?': Reconstructing African Careers in European Business from Company House Magazines and Oral History Interviews," *African History* 38 (2011).

institutionalized in associations.[26] This suited the colonial state, which feared the infiltration of critiques of colonialism of West African provenance.[27] Elite formation in the Belgian Congo was a national project, not a starting point for pan-African solidarity.

The colonial ideology of elite formation was translated into cultural practice in the *évolué* associations. In the debate on the Congolese elite that had been going on since 1944, the association was viewed as a key leisure-time locus, whose goal was to further the *évolués*' development. With its didactic focus, the association served as a learning laboratory of colonial subject formation. Here the ideal type of the "perfected black," as propagated in the media, was supposed to take shape – as an association member.

Elite periodicals such as the *Voix du Congolais* ceaselessly sought to persuade their readers to get involved in associations. In an editorial, editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba called on "the black who is perfecting himself" to join associations as a means of further education and civilizational perfecting.[28] But it was not just the editorials supervised by the General Government that championed the associations. Some correspondents were apologists for organized sociability as well. Over a number of years, Antoine-Marie Mobé, who I have quoted several times already and who was active in numerous associations, published essays such as "On the true role of the *évolué* associations" and "The need for indigenous associations."[29] In the style characteristic of official elite-making policy, Mobé assigned associations the following tasks: "The perfecting and intellectual, moral and physical development of their members; close cooperation with our custodians in their demanding work of colonizing and civilizing our country; and functioning as linking element between the masses and the authorities."[30]

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26 The Coastmen's dissociation from the *évolués* and their supposed arrogance towards them were the topic of many articles. One criticism was that the Coastmen felt more civilized and left the Congolese in no doubt about this; L. Kingansi, "A beau mentir vient de loin," *Voix du Congolais* no. 63 (June 1951).

27 By the 1920s, internationally networked anti-colonial groups had already formed among educated Africans in the British colonies. West African students began to band together in London and remained in close contact after their return to Africa. This group produced some of the first politicians in West Africa, such as Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe. For a detailed account, see Prais, "Imperial Travelers."

28 A.-R. Bolamba, "Les cercles des évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 17 (August 1947): 718.

29 A.-M. Mobé, "Nécessité des Associations Indigènes," *Voix du Congolais* no. 33 (October 1948); A.-M. Mobé, "Du rôle véritable des Associations d'Evoluants," *Voix du Congolais* no. 88 (July 1953).

30 Ibid., 470.

The rhetoric of self-perfecting was also to be found in the *Croix du Congo*, in which one contributor related how he had summed up the point of association meetings to an individual known for griping about these institutions: "To make complete human beings of its members: that is their ideal."[31]

The associations thus gave educated *évolués* the opportunity to cultivate an elite self-image. This, however, provoked criticism, as European observers saw it as confirmation of their fears that the elite was sealing itself off socially as a "caste." In the *Voix du Congolais*, editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba assailed the tendency of many "intellectuals" and "office workers" to refuse membership in their associations to ordinary labourers.[32] Bolamba warned these individuals "not to become the core of a pretentious Congolese elite and the living cells of a nascent caste."[33] It is in fact possible to observe in the Belgian Congo the dynamics typical of bourgeois associations in nineteenth-century Europe and other parts of the world, that is, the tendency to operate on an egalitarian basis internally and an elite basis externally.[34] This orientation, however, ran counter to a colonial elite-making policy that aimed to create a national elite across social boundaries, one that was supposed to simultaneously stimulate the development of the uneducated masses: "The elites belong to the nation. It is their obligation to advance the social body in its entirety,"[35] as Jean-Marie Domont, patron of the *Voix du Congolais*, wrote to programmatic effect in his book *Élite noire*.

We can gain a fairly precise picture of the associations' concrete activities with the help of association news published in the press. In November 1945, the *Voix du Congolais* established a special section running to several pages that carried reports on association meetings, elections, newly established groups, changes of personnel and programmes. In those cases, in which the secretary or president was not responsible for these reports, an association member was appointed press officer. In the 10 years between October 1945 and October 1955, the *Voix du Congolais* published a total of 550 such reports.[36]

These reports provided information on celebrations, sports events and excursions to other cities. They mirrored an association life dominated by talks given by individual members and locally resident Europeans or even colonial officials and *évolué* representatives who were passing through a given locality. These talks were often published in abbreviated form in the elite periodicals.

31 P. Mbaya, "Fréquentez votre cercle culturel," *Croix du Congo* (13 July 1952).
32 Bolamba, "Les cercles des évolués," 719.
33 Ibid.
34 Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit*, 43.
35 Domont, *Élite noire*, 25.
36 This figure is based on my own quantitative evaluation of the *Voix du Congolais*.

Thematically they ranged from customs, technological innovations and specialist professional knowledge to personal travel reports, news on colonial development projects and enacted ordinances. These talks not only reflected the spectrum of topics familiar from articles in the *évolué* media, but also operated within similar limits of the sayable.

Judging by the reports in the newspapers, the associations were the scene of criticism of members' immediate living conditions only if this was legitimized by the rhetoric of colonial reform. They were not platforms for charged discussions of political topics or the pursuit of decolonization in other African countries, or at least nothing of this sort made it to the outside world. If members brought up awkward topics at an association, having been influenced, for example, by perusing newspapers aimed at European readers, the governor general's advice was to discuss "articles containing false ideas" in the clubhouse and to "put them right" ideologically.[37] To ensure control of content, shortly after the war the General Government began to send ready-made topics and talks to associations throughout the colony via the administrative offices.[38] In a letter to the provincial governors, the vice-governor general of the Belgian Congo not only explained the desired approach to talks, but also their indoctrinating purpose for listeners. With its programmatic thrust and paternalistic tone, the letter gives a good impression of how colonial politicians regarded the *évolué* associations:

> The talks should be followed, logically enough, by a discussion led by the speaker. This method allows one to put right many of the false ideas prevalent among the *évolués*. The talks also help liberate the blacks from their intellectual poverty, the fate of all those who attended school a number of years ago. In a general sense they impart to the speakers a desire to read. Libraries should be established in the near future where they can obtain books that provide them with an opportunity for further education and meaningful diversion.[39]

As the colonial government saw it, the associations were sites of the ideological and moral education of Congolese school leavers. The colonial administration tried to steer the development of the associations through various decrees.[40] Prior to its foundation, every association had to write to the district commissioner requesting official permission to proceed. In addition to his powers of author-

37 Letter from General Government to the colonial minister, 4 September 1947, AA/GG/8693.
38 From 1946 on, entire series of such texts were sent out in single batches; AA/GG/10384.
39 Letter from the General Government to the colonial minister, 4 September 1947, AA/GG/8693.
40 Decrees of 11 February 1926, 25 August 1937 and 14 January 1941. See Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués*, 9.

ization, the district commissioner also had the right to have the associations monitored by the territorial administrators; in special cases the provincial governors could also bring in the *Service de sûreté*.[41] In general, the territorial officials were to instruct the associations to provide them with the minutes of all meetings and inform them of the location of their clubhouse as well as changes in the constitution and in the composition of their committee, information the official would then submit to the district commissioner.[42] Significantly, the colonial administration could dissolve associations, temporarily or permanently, and this it could do at its own discretion or, to cite the euphemistic language of the law, if associations "are acting contrary to civilization or represent a threat to public order."[43]

Exercising the right of control involved a tremendous administrative effort, featuring regular correspondence between associations and colonial officials. After every committee election, the associations were required to disclose private information about the office-holders, such as their names, background, address and occupation, which were then checked against police records in the districts' administrative offices.[44] Particularly if those occupying the influential post of president had a criminal record or were considered seditious and "hostile,"[45] which was all it took for them to be designated a "communist,"[46] the colonial authorities raised objections or had the association's activities closely monitored.[47]

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41 On the Belgian security service, which began to operate, mainly in urban Congo, in 1947, see J. Brassinne and F. Vandewalle, *Les rapports secrèts de la sûreté congolaise* (Brussels: Éditions Art et Voyages, 1973); A. Lauro, "Suspect Cities and the (Re)Making of Colonial Order: Urbanisation, Security Anxieties and Police Reforms in Postwar Congo (1945 – 1960)," in *Policing New Risks in Modern European History*, eds. J. Campion and X. Rousseaux (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). On the example of Burundi, see C. Deslaurier, "Du nouveau pour l'histoire politique au Burundi à la veille de l'indépendance. La documentation secrète de la Sûreté (1958 – 1961)," *Cahiers du CRA* 9 (1998).

42 As envisaged by the decree of 11 February 1926; circular from Jean Cordy, *chef de la population noire* in Moyen Congo district, to the association presidents, 28 June 1954, AA/GG/20171.

43 L. Strouvens and P. Piron, *Codes et lois du Congo belge* (Léopoldville: Édition des Codes et Lois du Congo Belge, 1948), 561.

44 Circular from Jean Cordy, *chef de la population noire* in Moyen Congo district, to the association presidents, 28 June 1954, AA/GG/20171.

45 Letter from the district commissioner of Tshuapa to the territorial administrators, 27 August 1947, AA/GG/8693.

46 Letter from the provincial governor in Bukavu to the *Service de la sûreté*, 7 June 1953, AA/GG/18682.

47 This occurred following the committee elections of the newly established *Fédération des Cercles du Costermansville*; ibid.

In the case of Léopoldville, we have clear evidence that the associations did not always comply with their duty of disclosure and that at times colonial officials neglected their monitoring role. When Jean Cordy, newly appointed head of the *Service de la Population Noire* in Léopoldville, requested a situation report on the associational landscape in the capital,[48] it emerged that the list of Congolese associations had not been fully updated since 1947. The reason for this review was that in the spring of 1953, the Colonial Ministry, under the leadership of the *Parti Libéral*, had informed the General Government about a new aspect of the promotion of associations. From now on, urban dwellers in particular were to be encouraged to establish so-called *mutualités*, whose members saved collectively so they could provide mutual support in times of hardship. Here Brussels made reference to the *likelembe* savings associations already established in the cities. *Likelembe* formed the basis for the establishment of many of the so-called "ethnic associations,"[49] which chiefly brought together people from the same region of origin and linguistic group for purposes of mutual support. The propagation and simultaneous privatization of systems of social security, of which the savings associations too formed part, were a hallmark of developmental colonialism in Africa. Belgium thus availed itself of measures to which Great Britain and France were resorting at the same time in their African colonies.[50] In any case, Cordy's internal report came to an alarming conclusion: "The lack of monitoring also means a lack of moral support. [...] These days I find associations completely lacking in organization, records and activity."[51] After publishing its report, the colonial administration mandated "authorized indigenous associations" to comply within three months with their duty to disclose any changes to the territorial administrator.[52] The membership figures, committee composition, treasury and savings books of all associations were examined and those associations existing only on paper and no longer holding meetings were dissolved.

These attempts to gain an overview of association activities revealed to the colonial administration the shortcomings of association policy and demonstrate that it repeatedly lost control of association activities. The authorities' efforts are

48 Letter from the General Government to the governor of Léopoldville province, 16 May 1953, AA/GG/16543.

49 Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 391.

50 See Eckert, "Wohlfahrtsmix," 104–109.

51 Report on the associational landscape by assistant to the territorial administrator in Léopoldville to head of the *Service de la population noire*, 5 August 1953, AA/GG/20171.

52 Letter from assistant to the territorial administrator in Léopoldville to head of the *Service de la population noire*, 19 August 1953, AA/GG/19596.

paradigmatic of the growing gulf between the colonial state's aspiration to control Congolese sociability and its capacity to do so, a gulf opened up by an associational landscape that had begun to thrive as the years passed by.

I would like to provide a provisional summary at this point. First, the associations and the press formed two mainstays of a colonial public sphere through which the colonial state sought to maintain its control of Congolese elite formation. The colonial authorities were eager to ensure that no printed or spoken material should make it into the *évolués*' public sphere in unfiltered form. The periodicals and associations of the elite, moreover, were closely intertwined. Typically, authors were simultaneously associational activists. The associations sent reports to the press, which in turn despatched articles to the associations as a basis for discussion.[53] European administrators and advisers in the press presided over the state-sponsored associations as patrons. But what this public sphere created was by no means only a space that enabled the authorities to control the elite. Despite everything, for the latter the public sphere also amounted to an increasingly translocal space of encounters and possibilities.

Second, the association was a privileged zone of contact between Europeans and Congolese. Europeans' prescribed patronage of associations entailed the institutionalization of encounters between colonizers and colonized, which otherwise occurred only in the workplace within a highly hierarchical framework. Nonetheless, for the most part dialogue within the association continued to be one between teachers and students. While carrying out research in Stanleyville in 1952, French urban sociologist Pierre Clément was surprised by the lack of friendships between Europeans and members of the AES. He himself recruited his personal research assistant from an *évolué* association, an individual with whom he remained in contact for years and whose career he supported: Patrice Lumumba.[54] It was guest visits of this kind, whether by representatives of the colonial administration, other European residents or those passing through, that made it easier for association members to make acquaintances and network beyond their quotidian horizons.

Third, for the Congolese elite associational sociability was a social means of cultural bourgeoisification: much as in the global bourgeois associational culture of the late nineteenth-century, associations offered their members a place for further education and self-perfection.[55] Association meetings, with their pro-

53 The General Government in particular sent articles to the state-sponsored associations. But there was also an exchange between the associations and periodicals run by missionaries.

54 P. Clément wrote an obituary of Lumumba in which he described the course of their friendship: P. Clément, "Patrice Lumumba (Stanleyville 1952 – 1953)," *Présence Africaine* no. 40, 1962.

55 Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit und Demokratie*, 17 and 38.

gramme of talks, facilitated discussion of social and cultural issues. It was above all those Congolese who were eager to ascend within colonial structures that found in the associations an excellent platform to present themselves to the colonial administrators as loyal and in a way that elite discourse regarded as civilized. The intellectual activities involved required a certain degree of cultural capital as well as augmenting this capital, which served in significant part as a means of colonial distinction *vis-à-vis* the majority of society. Association office holders in particular entered into direct dialogue with their European advisers, who were often the local representatives of the colonial administration.[56]

Fourth, the associations provided a meeting place for educated Congolese who resided in localities scattered throughout the colonial territory but had made a name for themselves through their journalistic work. Authors and readers got to know one another by attending association meetings. If at all, it was there that members of the imagined community of the *évolués* could meet. That it was not only those who already knew one another because they had attended the same school that forged relationships is evident in the friendship between Antoine-Roger Bolamba, editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, and Antoine-Marie Mobé, the diligent reporter and some-time president of the AES. They first became aware of each other due to their authorial activities for the same publications. When Bolamba stopped off in Stanleyville while travelling through several provinces in 1948, they got to know each other in person and subsequently kept in touch.[57] In 1949, the *Voix du Congolais* published a photograph of a meeting in Stanleyville showing the pair together with their wives and children. To this day Mobé's eldest son recalls how his father would always pay a visit to Bolamba during his stays in Léopoldville.[58] Their example also demonstrates that friendships between representatives of the Congolese elite could function as support networks. For Mobé's career path, his link with the influential editor-in-chief from Léopoldville paid dividends. Mobé held a senior position in Stanleyville as an officer worker at the postal service. When his request for transfer to the General Government in Léopoldville was turned down,[59] Bolamba pulled some strings, so that in 1953 Mobé at least obtained a post in the provin-

56 That the intermediaries used the room for manoeuvre they were provided with is emphasized in several studies, such as A. Eckert, "Cultural Commuters: African Employees in Late Colonial Tanzania," in *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, eds. B. Lawrance et al. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

57 A.-R. Bolamba, "Impressions de voyage," *Voix du Congolais* no. 47 (February 1950): 99 – 101.

58 Interview with Jean de la Croix Mobé, Kinshasa, 31 August 2010.

59 Letter from the secretary general of the General Government to Mobé, 24 March 1953, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

cial administration of his home region. Working for the provincial governor's *Direction des Affaires Indigènes*, henceforth Mobé saw to the sales and distribution, as well as the finances, of the *Mbandaka* journal, which sought to attract the province's *évolués* readers.[60] In a letter, Bolamba assured Mobé of his ongoing support.[61] Occasional friendly turns appear to have strengthened their ties; this at least is one interpretation of Bolamba's remark: "Your friend still hasn't given my wife the pillowcase."[62] A job in exchange for bed linen: this appears to be a manifestation of the friendly, symbolic bartering between two leading representatives of the elite public sphere.

Fifth, the colonial state provided the Congolese elite with a public sphere in the shape of media and associations in order to furnish itself with instruments of control. It is, however, reasonable to doubt whether we should even refer to a public sphere in the singular. The cultural and social practice of associational sociability created situational spaces of encounter and exchange spread across the entire colonial territory. Rather than homogenization, associations in the Belgian Congo triggered a process of differentiation, generating several public spheres rather than just one. Through late colonial "social engineering," the authorities attempted to standardize the vernacular elite ideologically and culturally in the crucible of the associations, but they faced one major obstacle: the cultural, confessional, linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity of a territory the size of Western Europe. The associations brought together all locally resident *évolués*, or at least aspired to. Long-time residents thus encountered Congolese from other parts of the territory whose work had caused them to move. Affiliation to the imagined community of the *évolués* could create new forms of social affinity and overarch the manifold forms of identity on offer. The *évolués*' associational sociability, however, did not necessarily always produce social cohesion, but also division and exclusion. Rather than overcoming them, the associations accentuated the social order, based on colonial distinction.

60 Correspondence between Antoine-Roger Bolamba and the governor of Équateur province, 8 April 1953 and 23 April 1953, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

61 Letter from Bolamba to Mobé, 27 April 1953, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

62 Ibid.

Cohesion and dissociation among missionary school graduates

A significant role model for the *évolué* associations were the missions' post-school institutions. The so-called "alumni associations"[63] were the first official Congolese clubs to clothe themselves in the garb of Europe's associational culture. These alumni associations served as an extension of the mission schools and their programme of evangelization; they constituted a key strategic element in the missions' efforts to ensure that their graduates remained permanently committed to a pious and moral way of life.

But the launch of the colonial state's association policy in 1945 did not spell the end of the alumni associations. In fact, the increasing numbers of pupils enrolled in schools and school leavers actually caused their membership to grow.[64] These are superficial figures, however, given that this intake was brought about by the principle of compulsory membership. It is true that every school leaver was automatically admitted, but not everyone participated actively in association activities. Further, many individuals were also members of other associations. Nonetheless, as a rule, all those who were designated *évolués* also enjoyed the status of alumni. It is crucial to adopt a differentiating perspective on the mission schools and their associations. The alumni associations were organized into umbrella bodies mirroring the numerous missionary orders; there were also branches throughout the colony in the various districts, urban settlements and even different urban subdivisions. Likewise, every individual mission school and even some school-leaving cohorts had their post-school counterparts.[65]

The configuration of the alumni associations ultimately reflected the relative strength of the missionary orders active in the Belgian Congo. There were eighteen umbrella associations linked with these orders, most of which, however, brought together just a small number of former pupils, such as *Anepejos*, affiliated with the Capuchin Fathers, *Unelma*, associated with the Marist Brothers of

63 For a general account, see Verhaegen, "Les Associations congolaises," 413–416.

64 In 1934, 350,000 children attended primary school in the Belgian Congo; by 1946 this had climbed to 897,969, and in 1953 the figure was 1,065,688; Brausch, *Belgian Administration*, 10; Stengers, *Congo*, 205. The increase in the number of pupils in Léopoldville is evinced, for example, by statistics for the 1951–1958 period; KADOC/Z/III/d/2/7.

65 This applied, for example, to the first cohort to graduate from the Scheut mission school of St. Joseph in Léopoldville. The class of 1949 called themselves Asceneuf and maintained an interpersonal network for a number of decades; C. A. Mwissa-Camus, *L'héritage Tata Raphael. 1911–2011. Un siècle d'histoire à Kinshasa avec les pères de Scheut* (Kinshasa 2011), 81–84; interview with André Matingu, Kinshasa, 7 September 2010.

the Schools and *Les anciens élèves des pères Jésuites*, which, for example, ran two branches.[66] It goes without saying that the two religious orders with the greatest number of graduates also established the largest and most influential umbrella organizations. These were the *Association des anciens élèves des pères de Scheut* (ADAPES) and the *Association des anciens élèves des Frères* (ASSANEF), mentioned earlier in connection with the elite periodicals.

When the colonial state launched its programmes to support associations in 1945, the ADAPES had already existed for 20 years.[67] Its constitution identified the association's objective as achieving "the total wellbeing of its members: their material and moral wellbeing as well as their development as human beings and Christians."[68] The *Adapesiens* were more than a religious society, for this post-school group was intended to raise its members socially, materially and in terms of their character. In accord with the ideology of Catholic Action, school leavers functioned as a social role model, through a way of life informed by Christian morality, for example.

This umbrella body's premises were in Léopoldville; it was established by Raphael de la Kethulle de Ryhove in 1925. The ADAPES was thus one of the many recreational establishments founded by the ever-busy Belgian missionary of noble descent for the urban Congolese population.[69] The strong presence of the ADAPES in the capital was due to the fact that the Scheutists were in charge of the diocese of Léopoldville and the graduates of their secondary schools found more employment opportunities there, in the administrative system, than anywhere else. Reports from 1944 and 1952 referred to a total of 10,000 former Scheut pupils resident in Léopoldville, comprising two-thirds of *Adapesiens*

66 Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 413.

67 The roots of ADAPES lie in Léopoldville. There, seven years after the establishment of the St. Joseph school, an alumni association called the *Association des anciens élèves de l'institut Saint-Joseph à Kinshasa* was founded. The change of name to the *Association des anciens élèves des pères de Scheut* highlights the association's extension to graduates of other schools run by Scheut missionaries; C. Tshimanga, "L'ADAPES et la formation d'une élite au Congo (1925 – 1945)," in *Itinéraires croisés de la modernité Congo belge (1920 – 1950)*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 196.

68 Constitution of ADAPES, 1945, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4.

69 On the biography of de la Kethulle, who worked in the Belgian Congo as a missionary from 1917 on, see M. Storme and P. Dephoperé, "Raphael de la Kethulle de Ryhove," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 6, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1968).

in the colony, of which, however, just 500 or so played an active part in association life and paid their membership fees.[70]

Places on the ADAPES committee were much sought-after and were occupied by individuals of importance in the elite's public sphere. In 1944, for example, Paul Lomami-Tshibamba, whose article had kicked off the post-war debate on *évolué* status, held the office of secretary in Léopoldville.[71] In 1952, Patrice Lumumba and Antoine-Marie Mobé established a branch of the ADAPES in Stanleyville and assumed the offices of president and vice-president.[72] That Lumumba sought to found this association despite the fact that he had not attended a Scheut school highlights the advantages entailed in admittance to the network of alumni.[73] Holding a high office at the ADAPES promised prestige: apart from anything else, office-holders were central to the reports produced by a diverse range of newspapers, which published photographs and the minutes of meetings.

As mentioned earlier, the ADAPES was part of the Scheut missions' Catholic Action, along with the *Croix du Congo* newspaper. It was thus affiliated with a publication that was primed to carry reports on association activities. For alumni outside the capital, meanwhile, this newspaper was the only translocal medium of informational exchange. The association leaders thus had great expectations of the publication. These were reflected, for example, in letters of complaint from the ADAPES secretaries to the highest authority of the Scheut missionary order, in which they vented their occasional dismay at the abridged publication of minutes.[74]

ADAPES meetings were an intermittent occurrence and typically featured talks and discussions. The committee, elected annually on Easter Sunday, met once a month. The annual celebrations, meanwhile, always took place in a church building in Léopoldville, on the first Sunday after the Catholic feast day of the association's patron saint, Saint Joseph.[75] They began with an early-

70 Letter from Paul Lomami-Tshibamba to *Révérend Père Supérieur*, 11 January 1944, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4; reports on the Scheut missions' extramural and post-school activities, 1952, KADOC/Z/III/d/2/7.

71 Letter from Paul Lomami-Tshibamba to *Révérend Père Supérieur*, 11 January 1944, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4.

72 P. Lumumba, "Activité des cercles, Stanleyville," *Voix du Congolais* no. 71 (February 1952): 110.

73 Mutamba-Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba*, 38.

74 Letter from Paul Lomami-Tshibamba to *Révérend Père Supérieur*, 11 January 1944, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4.

75 Constitution of ADAPES, 1945, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4; interview with André Matingu, Kinshasa, 7 September 2010.

morning mass, at which the alumni, together with the pupils, formed the choir. In the afternoon there followed a convivial party and a shared dinner, to which members and their families as well as religious dignitaries and representatives of the colonial administration were invited. Songs, speeches and Catholic rituals were the order of the day. The annual celebrations orchestrated a community of equals and a "cordial atmosphere."[76]

The ADAPES was an extramural locus of colonial subject formation in the spirit of Catholic Action. Association president Jean Bolikango, who had taught at St. Joseph's School since 1926,[77] thus used the 1952 celebration to promote the ideal of the association member: "A true *Adapessien* is someone who takes up every invitation to a meeting. He is reliable, paying the required membership fees on time. [...] He is patriotic, civic-minded and sets a good example wherever possible."[78] It was an ideal that, in addition to religiosity and the habit of paying one's fees promptly, chiefly demanded worldly virtues of members.

The second major umbrella organization of former mission school pupils was the ASSANEF. It was founded in 1929, also in Léopoldville, and brought together all the associations for graduates of the schools run by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes* missionary order.[79] This order had already taken charge of the *Colonie Scolaire* in Boma in 1909, the boarding school for Congolese children whose curriculum was tailored to the needs of the colonial state and that had previously been run by Scheut missionaries. In 1916, the *Frères* established a division within the *Colonie Scolaire* dedicated to the training of "prospective office assistants."[80] The renown of the *Assanefiens* was chiefly based on the function of these establishments as official elite training centres for public servants, who

76 To quote a 1952 report on the annual celebration. See A. Ngwenza, "En marge de la fête anuelle de l'ADAPES," *Croix du Congo*, 8 June 1952.

77 Mwissa-Camus, *L'héritage*, 73 – 77. Bolikango held the presidency of the association from 1942; F. Bontinck, "Les missions catholiques à Léopoldville durant la seconde guerre mondiale," in *Le Congo belge durant la seconde guerre mondiale*, ed. Académie royale (Brussels: 1983), 411.

78 J. Bolikango, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Adapessiens," *Croix du Congo* (8 June 1952).

79 The colonial administration initially registered the association in 1933 under the name *Union-Léo Kinoise*; letter from association president Louis Diantama to the district commissioner in Léopoldville, 9 May 1956, ASSANEF archive. The ASSANEF's constitution reveals the various groups included within it when it was founded in 1932: a theatre group, a savings association, sports teams and a brass band; constitution of ASSANEF, 1932, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/11.

80 Manuscript for a special broadcast on *Radio Congo Belge* in Léopoldville marking the feast day of St. Jean Baptiste de la Salle, 13 October 1950, ASSANEF archive. In 1930, a branch of this official training centre for employment in the colonial state was established in Coquilhatville in the shape of the *Groupe Scolaire*.

were educated for auxiliary roles within the colonial administration.[81] But by 1910 the missionary order had founded an *école professionnelle* in Kintambo near Léopoldville that also taught skilled trades. Ten additional schools had been established by 1956, mainly in Équateur and Bas Congo provinces.[82]

Much as with the ADAPES, for all these educational establishments there were ASSANEF subgroups.[83] The two umbrella organizations also resembled one another in their aims and ideological agenda: the ASSANEF too was committed to strengthening the fraternal ties among former pupils, fostering a Catholic outlook on life and encouraging self-perfection as well as the assumption of social responsibility.[84]

This alumni association grew naturally in line with the increasing number of school leavers. In 1934 the ASSANEF had 1,560 members,[85] climbing to no less than 30,000 by 1950. 3,000 of the latter lived in Léopoldville, of which 178 worked as office assistants for the General Government and another 300 were employed by the provincial administration.[86] It is no coincidence that some of them represented the core workforce of the *Voix du Congolais*, published by the General Government. In the shape of Antoine-Roger Bolamba and Michel Colin, for example, all the editors-in-chief in the history of the newspaper were former pupils of the *Colonie Scolaire* in Boma. The association committee featured representatives of the Congolese elite who had been exemplary employees of the colonial administration: Antoine-Roger Bolamba was an active member and also vice-president from 1956.[87] Naturally, the *Voix du Congolais* also reported on ASSANEF activities and meetings. Furthermore, from 1929 on, the aforementioned periodical *Signum Fidei* served as a medium of exchange and

81 Interview with Jean Masitu, Kinshasa, 6 September 2010; interview with Jean Casimir Pukuta, Kinshasa, 26 August 2010.

82 Manuscript for a special broadcast on *Radio Congo Belge* in Léopoldville marking the feast day of St. Jean Baptiste de la Salle, 13 October 1950, ASSANEF archive.

83 J.-H. Bumba Mwaka, "Les strategies de communication au sein de l'association des anciens élèves des frères des écoles chrétiennes, ASSANEF" (CIPED Lukunga/Kinshasa, Kinshasa 2009), 6. By 1927 there was an alumni association for school leavers from Léopold II province with 162 members; F. M., "Les oeuvres post-scolaires de Léo II," *Signum Fidei*, August-September 1936, 254–256.

84 Letter from association president Louis Diantama to the district commissioner in Léopoldville, 9 May 1956, ASSANEF archive.

85 *Signum Fidei*, December 1934.

86 Manuscript for a special broadcast on *Radio Congo Belge* in Léopoldville marking the feast day of St. Jean Baptiste de la Salle, 13 October 1950, ASSANEF archive.

87 As revealed by a list showing the association chairmen in the Congolese section of ASSANEF: letter from association president Louis Diantama to the district commissioner in Léopoldville, 9 May 1956, ASSANEF archive.

community formation for alumni. It enjoyed wide circulation in Léopoldville in particular and had around 400 subscribers in 1945, rising to 3,000 by 1954.[88]

The year 1954 saw several milestones in the association's history. First, King Baudouin awarded ASSANEF the honorary status of *Association Royale*.[89] Second, a clubhouse was opened in Léopoldville, with a grand inauguration ceremony in late October 1954. Henceforth, the so-called Home ASSANEF was one of the largest recreational facilities in the Congolese quarter. It accommodated a hall with seating for a thousand people, a stage and film projectors, a restaurant, conference room, library and bar.[90] No other Congolese association in the colony had such impressive premises, which had been constructed to the design of a Belgian architect with the aid of a broad network of supporters. The colonial administration had granted favourable purchase conditions, while the building costs were covered by donations from European and Congolese members, who were awarded honorary membership if they contributed 1,000 francs or more.[91] Even the Vatican subsidized the building project to the tune of 100,000 Belgian francs.[92] In addition to association members and representatives of the missionary order, the opening ceremony, which began with an early morning mass according to Catholic protocol, was attended by many worldly guests as well. The governor general sent an envoy, and the provincial governor was also in attendance.[93] Henceforth, the building was the scene of regular cultural evenings, association meetings and series of talks.[94] The Home ASSANEF clubhouse was an expression in stone of the privileged relationship between the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes* and the colonial state.

Members of ADAPES noted with envy the construction of the clubhouse and the publication of a bespoke periodical. In October 1951, its president Jean Boli-

88 For these figures, see M. Colin, "Noces d'or," *Voix du Congolais* no. 95 (February 1954): 146; Bontinck, "Les missions," 411.

89 "A l'Assanef," *Voix du Congolais* no. 106 (January 1955): 188.

90 Ibid., 183 – 185.

91 Interview with Jean Masitu, Kinshasa, 6 September 2010.

92 "A l'Assanef," *Voix du Congolais* no. 106 (January 1955): 183 – 185.

93 Ibid.

94 Under the rule of Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, in the late 1960s the Home ASSANEF served as a prison and hosted show trials of members of the student movement critical of the regime. On the Congolese student movement, see P. Monaville, "Decolonizing the University. Postal Politics, the Student Movement, and Global 1968 in the Congo" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Michigan, 2013). In 2006, the building came back into the possession of ASSANEF, which is still active to this day, and is being renovated; see Toulier, *Kinshasa*, 93.

Fig. 10: Annual ASSANEF celebration in the Home building, 1951. Paul Bolya is giving a talk. The front row includes Gustave Sand, head of the AIMO (second from left), Governor General Eugène Jungers (fifth from left) and Georges Six, apostolic vicar of Léopoldville (seventh from left).

kango sent a letter to Georges Six, apostolic vicar of Léopoldville,[95] requesting financial support for the building of an ADAPES clubhouse. He justified his request with reference to the large number of members in the capital and the current plans for the Home ASSANEF.[96] The association president was also keen for ADAPES to have its own periodical as a counterpart to ASSANEF's *Signum Fidei*. He pointed out that the *Croix du Congo*, with its general aspirations, could not advance ADAPES's specific interests. Bolikango reinforced his request for a publication of this kind by describing the press as a modern-day vehicle of the apostolate: "If Saint Paul returned to earth, he would be a journalist."[97]

His wishes fell on deaf ears, however. Instead, the *Croix du Congo* relaunched the association news section in April 1952, with "The ADAPES Page"

95 In the Roman Catholic church an apostolic vicariate is an organizational unit preceding the creation of a diocese. See F. Kalde, "Diözesane und quasidiözesane Teilkirchen," in *Handbuch des katholischen Kirchenrechts*, eds. J. Listl and H. Schmitz (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1999), 423.

96 Letter from Bolikango to Monseigneur Six, 6 October 1951, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14.

97 Ibid.

reporting monthly on the Scheut mission schools' alumni associations. The association committee, which provided most of the material for this section, intended it to arouse members' enthusiasm, encourage them to get involved and generate more publicity for the association.[98]

The rivalry between the two largest Catholic alumni associations exemplifies the splintering of the *évolués* as a social group.[99] It was not just unequal privileges but also associational sociability that positively fostered these divisions. Anyone today who talks to former and still active members of the two associations will be left in no doubt about the rivalry between ADAPES and ASSANEF. At the symbolic level, the association members were fighting out a battle for supremacy – and nowhere did it find clearer expression than on the football pitches of Léopoldville.[100]

Football had grown in popularity in the Belgian Congo from the 1920s onwards and, like other sports, was supported by the colonial state and missions.[101] Physical training through sport was part of the civilizing mission and, with its emphasis on fair play, was not only meant to aid the bodily improvement of Congolese but also help edify their character.[102] From 1919 on, the *Association Royale Sportive Congolaise Indigène* (ARSC) provided an overarching framework for organized club sports in Léopoldville. Raphael de la Kethulle of the Scheut missionary order was one of the founding fathers of this umbrella organization and long held the post of president.[103] In 1924, the ARSC began to organize city-wide football championships and grew to encompass six leagues, comprised of a total of fifty to sixty teams, whose matches attracted between 3,000 and 15,000

98 Ngwenza, "En marge."

99 This discord was apparently due in part to personal frictions between Raphael de la Kethulle and Frère Mathieu, the heads of the two alumni organizations; interview with André Matingu, Kinshasa, 7 September 2010.

100 I was made aware of this state of affairs by two interviewees from among the ranks of the ADAPESSIENS – Mwissa Camus, who worked as a journalist in the 1950s for the *Courrier d'Afrique*, *Echo Sports* and *Croix du Congo*, and André Matingu, who also wrote for the *Courrier d'Afrique*. Among other things, both gave accounts of football in Léopoldville; interview with Camille Auguste Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010; interview with André Matingu, Kinshasa, 7 September 2010.

101 On the history of football in colonial Africa, see P. Alegi, *African Soccerscapes: How a Continent Changes the World's Game* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010). On the case of Senegal, see S. Baller, *Spielfelder der Stadt. Fußball und Jugendpolitik im Senegal seit 1950* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010). An account of football in the Belgian Congo is provided by B. Van Peel, "Débuts du football congolais," in *Itinéraires croisés de la modernité Congo belge (1920 – 1950)*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

102 Ibid. Sport served the same purpose in Tanganyika; see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 76.

103 Alegi, *African Soccerscapes*, 24.

spectators.[104] The premier league in particular drew widespread interest within urban society and the media.[105] The various football teams were closely associated with missionary orders, firms and even the armed forces, recruiting players from all of them.[106] In institutional terms, the two most successful clubs were affiliated with the two large alumni associations: ADAPES was represented by the Daring team and ASSANEF by the Dragons.[107]

Given the rivalry described above, the encounter between these two teams was more than a sporting showdown. The aggressive partisanship and identification, together with the symbolic interactions inherent in the sport of football, transformed this event into a symbolic battle for the status of most successful and prestigious alumni association.[108] The two teams' supporters emphasized the differences between the two rival associations with particular vehemence. It is thus worth scrutinizing this clash with reference to the season of 1952.

Before the season had even begun, the *Croix du Congo* and *Voix du Congolais* tried to calm down the intense feelings that had been building since the match between Daring and Dragons during the last season, which had seen instances of unsportsmanlike behaviour and violent clashes on and off the pitch. The *Croix du Congo* upbraided the fans for their sectarianism and for insulting the opposing team during this match.[109] The *Voix du Congolais* then appealed to the players,' association leaders' and supporters' sportsmanship and common sense.[110] It reminded its readers that sport was a character-building exercise conducive to "moral and spiritual perfecting."[111] Whatever the result, sportsmanlike and thus civilized conduct was appropriate: "In victory and defeat, show yourselves to be sportsmen, *évolués*, and why not civilized men?"[112]

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104 These figures refer to 1939 and 1952; *Association Royale Sportive Congolaise*, Léopoldville 1939, 19; reports on extramural and post-school activities of the Scheut missions, 1952, KADOC/Z/III/d/2/7.

105 *Association Royale Sportive Congolaise*, 19.

106 Mémoires du Congo et du Ruanda-Urundi, *Tata Raphael. Témoignage de RP Henri de la Kethulle et de RP Joseph Bollen* (Brussels: Université Saint-Louis, 2010).

107 The matches between these teams were major events in Léopoldville. A football match provides the setting for a chapter in a 1959 novel; D. Mutombo, *Victoire de l'amour* (Leverville: Bibliothèque de l'Étoile, 1959), 56 – 63.

108 For an analysis of symbolic interactions at football matches, see D. Tödt and S. Vosgerau, "Ethnizität und Ethnische Repräsentationen im Fußball. Am Beispiel Türkiyemspor Berlin," in *Aus der Halbdistanz. Fußballbiografien und Fußballkulturen heute*, eds. S. Krankenhagen and B. Schmidt (Münster: Lit, 2007).

109 B. Arbo, "Au seuil du championnat 1952 de l'ARSC," *Croix du Congo* (24 February 1952).

110 M. Colin, "L'allégresse du fair play sportif," *Voix du Congolais* no. 73 (April 1952): 214 – 216.

111 Arbo, "Au seuil."

112 Colin, "L'allégresse," 216.

The two newspapers then carried reports on a match at the packed Stade Astrid, which Daring won 3 – 1, with the son of ADAPES president Jean Bolikango one of those taking to the field for Daring. On this occasion, however, the reports were quite partisan and testified to the media's institutional proximity to the missionary orders. "Daring overwhelms the Dragons and extends its lead,"[113] stated the *Croix du Congo*, which carried a euphoric report on the course of the match. The report in the *Voix du Congolais* read very differently: with no mention of the result, the focus was on the fans and the many fouls on the pitch. Special emphasis was placed on the insults directed by Daring fans against students of the *école professionelle*, who made up much of the Dragon team. "You are workers we don't need,"[114] the Daring supporters are said to have shouted. In view of this abuse meted out to ordinary workers, the author underlined that the reaction of the team and its fans had been exemplary: "Fortunately, workers generally show greater dignity and respond in a simple but intelligent way: 'That's nothing to us, but you will always need workers.' This reply, with its common sense, honours them and is proof of their excellent education."[115]

This was not an isolated incident. Supporters of ADAPES often made fun of certain ASSANEF members' status as tradesmen. As mentioned earlier, the ASSANEF milieu in the capital included many individuals in the employ of the colonial administration. Yet the most important educational establishment run by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes* in Léopoldville was dedicated to training for the skilled trades. For graduates of the Scheut mission schools, this provided a welcome opportunity for distinction, for the administrative professions were more lucrative and were considered more prestigious. This selective and elitist self-image of ADAPES members is still mentioned in interviews with contemporary witnesses. As they remember it, the Daring football team was made up of intellectuals, who worked as typists and spoke better French than the Dragons players, who worked as tradesmen.[116] They also refer disdainfully to the ASSANEF's closeness to the colonial state: the Dragons football club, for example, was funded by the General Government, while ADAPES and its founder Raphael de la Kethulle made financial contributions to the Daring team on a voluntary basis.[117] The Dragons' proximity to the colonial state found reflection, not least, in their strip: the players took to the field in the colours of the Belgian tricolour,

113 Elima, "Daring écrase Dragons et accentue son avance," *Croix du Congo* (23 March 1952).
114 "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 74 (May 1952): 277.
115 Ibid.
116 Interview with Camille Auguste Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010; interview with André Matingu, Kinshasa, 7 September 2010.
117 Ibid.

with black trousers and yellow-and-red jerseys, making this connection visible to everyone in the stadium.[118]

This detour around the football pitches of Léopoldville was intended to bring out how the communitization of the Congolese elite in the alumni associations could lead both to internal cohesion and the drawing of boundaries. In particular, the parallel infrastructure of the two largest missionary orders fostered social and cultural processes of symbolic distinction. Through schools and associations, sports clubs and periodicals, the missionary orders created two milieus with their own media and social spaces. This drawing of symbolic boundaries within the social formation of the *évolués* was situational and occurred, for example, based on affiliation with certain schools and occupations. The exclusionary effects that are always part and parcel of communitization ran counter to the emergence of a Congolese elite in the alumni associations.

Engaged colonial officials and illustrious circles

Évolué associations established on the initiative of the colonial state were dependent on the engagement of European administrative officials. What was the nature of the relationship between the associations and the colonial administration? To what extent did the associations in Léopoldville benefit from the fact that European officials in the employ of the General Government, which was based in the city, were supposed to make good on the promises of late colonial development? And what did it mean for associations if Léopoldville, and thus a pro-reform colonial government, was several hundred kilometres away? In other words, what happened when *évolués*, insisting on change, had to make do with representatives of the colonial administration who took a sceptical view of the state's elite-making efforts and believed the local power structure to be under threat? Two associations, one in Léopoldville and the other in Stanleyville, furnish us with a good basis for a comparison of locally specific associational cultures. Further, these examples of elite associational sociability make it clear that as a group the much propagandized *évolués* could fissure, not just due to its members' identification with occupational and educational groupings, but just as much in light of regionally and ethnically based distinctions.

In February 1947, the *Voix du Congolais* reported on the establishment of the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments* in Léopoldville, initiated by Emmanuel Capelle.[119]

118 Mwissa-Camus, *L'héritage*, 48.

119 See "Activités des cercles d'évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 13 (January-February 1947): 569.

As *Chef de la Population Noire*, Capelle was responsible for the local implementation of elite-making policy.[120] In his aforementioned study of the African quarters he had commended the activities of associations in the capital, which he saw as evidence that Belgian associational culture had taken hold in the colony: "One might think that the blacks had been born in Brussels, so great is their love of associations."[121]

The association initiated by Capelle sought to bring together the "capital's most educated natives." This select group was a showcase for the colonial state's association policy. Anyone wishing to become a member had to demonstrate "impeccable conduct" and submit references from two individuals, who had to be on the association committee or long-standing members.[122] The list of members reads like a "who's who" of the elite Congolese public sphere, whose representatives in Léopoldville occupied senior positions in the colonial working world, but above all in the civil service. The committee was made up almost exclusively of permanent authors of the *Voix du Congolais* or founding members of the paper. The first association president, Eugène Kabamba, a graduate of the *Colonie Scolaire* in Boma, had worked for the General Government since 1928 and at the time of the association's foundation he was also president of the ASSANEF alumni association.[123] Further, in 1947, together with editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, Kabamba had taken part in the official meeting with the colonial minister in Léopoldville in order to make the case for the *évolués* card in the midst of the contentious debate on status reform. Another committee member of the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments* had attended this highly symbolic meeting: Jean-Pierre Dericoyard, a former office worker from the vicinity of Stanleyville, who ran a furniture business in the capital and had become involved in the General Government's *Service de l'Information pour les Indigènes* in 1944.[124] The association's inner circle also included Paul Bolya, one of the few Congolese doctor's assistants and by now himself a trainer at the *École assistants médicaux indigènes* (AMI) in Léopoldville.[125] Antoine Omari, a book-

120 On his biography, see J. Vanhove, "Capelle," in *Biographie belge d'outre-mer*, vol. 7-A, ed. Académie Royale Science d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1973).

121 Capelle, *La Cité*, 75.

122 "Activités des cercles d'évolués," *Voix du Congolais* no. 13 (January-February 1947): 569.

123 Lafarge Bembika, *Sur les pas*, 145 – 148.

124 Lafontaine, *City Politics*, 219.

125 By 1954 there were 90 Congolese doctor's assistants. On Bolya's biography, see J. Sabakinu Kivilu, "Paul-Gabriel Dieudonné Bolya: de l'assistant médical à l'homme politique," in *Les mémoires du Congo. Le temps colonial*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Gent: Éditions Snoeck, 2005), 236; interview with Césarine Bolya, Kinshasa, 11 August 2010.

keeper at a leading construction firm, assumed the presidency of the association in 1952. As a contributor to the *Voix du Congolais*, he too had expressed vigorous support for legal assimilation; in the debate on the reform of immatriculation, he had written articles critical of the resistance emanating from the European milieu of Katanga province.

In the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments*, then, Capelle the colonial administrator brought together not just the capital's intellectual elite, but also some of the key protagonists in the public debate on post-war colonial reforms. In Capelle the association found a pro-reform colonial official who backed the official policy of elite promotion both theoretically and in practical terms. When Congolese members' demands were consonant with the colonial state's developmental promises, they were assured of Capelle's support.

But even if the relationship between association patron and members with respect to elite-making policy resembled that between lawyer and client, it was still a teacher-pupil relationship. Capelle by no means shed the paternalistic attitude so common among Europeans towards their supposed Congolese charges. Association activities, then, were under his direction and oscillated between lectures and programmes of entertainment.[126] There were highbrow talks that flattered members' elitism: in 1947, a territorial administrator gave a series of lectures on sociology; there were presentations by a legal scholar on the European marriage contract and papers on the Belgian ruling house.[127] Capelle often gave talks himself, for example on Europe's technological and industrial development. While European guests discussed the merits of their home countries, the Congolese members presented themselves as experts on their society of origin. Jean Mavuela talked about indigenous customs, Antoine Omari about the wedding traditions of the Bakusu.[128] In addition to these educational evenings, Capelle frequently organized activities intended to maintain association members' morale: a sightseeing flight with the Belgian national airline Sabena, boat trips, theatre shows and film screenings, with the audience made up of high-ranking members of the colonial government, and trips to the zoo.[129] The association en-

126 The association secretary praised Capelle's diversified programme; P. Bolya, "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 75 (June 1952): 369.

127 "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 14 (March-April 1947): 615; "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 17 (August 1947): 748; "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 19 (October 1947): 823.

128 "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 16 (July 1947): 709; "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 18 (September 1947): 788.

129 "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 16 (July 1947): 709; "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix du Congolais* no. 58 (January 1951): 50; "Cercle d'étude et d'agrément," *Voix*

abled its members to gain temporary access to places that were usually reserved for Europeans. Nonetheless, the various events were not a neutral, non-political form of amusement. This was a colonial programme of persuasion, which presented influential members with Europe's technological and cultural progress as well as the Belgian Congo's catch-up development thanks to the Ten-Year Plan. These events gave a Congolese elite loyal to the state a foretaste of the colonial world of tomorrow.

Fig. 11: Members of the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments* prior to a sightseeing flight, 1949.

That Emmanuel Capelle's early death in 1953 also spelt the end of the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments*[130] brings out his decisive influence on the fate of this association. Nonetheless, other associations continued to bring representatives of the vernacular elite together with European actors in the capital. The latter included staff of the General Government and administrative offices, who readily implemented the directives flowing from colonial reforms, which included a respectful approach to the Congolese elite. It was this milieu that gave rise to the

du Congolais no. 19 (October 1947): 823; Bolya, "Cercle," 369 – 371. At one theatre show in the hall of the Stade Astrid, Gustave Sand, Emmanuel Capelle and Jean-Marie Domont were in attendance; "Activité des cercles des élites," *Voix du Congolais* no. 22 (January 1948): 47.

130 Tellingly, the final report by the association appeared in the same issue of the *Voix du Congolais* as the obituary of Capelle; Ephémérides, "Le décès de M. Emmanuel Capelle," *Voix du Congolais* no. 91 (October 1953): 697 – 698; "Activités des cercles, Léopoldville," *Voix du Congolais* no. 91 (October 1953): 704.

Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais, founded in Léopoldville in 1950, with which Capelle too was associated, until his death, as an honorary member.[131] Leading members were editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais* Antoine-Roger Bolamba and André Scohy, an employee of the General Government's Information Service.[132] To quote its constitution, the association fostered the

> ever closer convergence between Belgians and Congolese at the cultural level. It puts emphasis on collegiality and friendship among its members. On the basis of respect, racial non-discrimination and the foundations of the Belgian colonial tradition, above all else the association brings together writers, journalists, artists, Congolese and Belgians in the Léopoldville region.[133]

Symbolizing Belgian-Congolese convergence, the inaugural meeting took place in one of the poshest restaurants in Léopoldville, located in the Parc de Boek in the unpopulated so-called "neutral zone" between the African and European quarters.[134] This was where the association subsequently held its meetings, featuring sumptuous dinners, to which twenty-nine Europeans and twenty-nine Congolese were invited. Press releases underlined that they sat at the same table.[135] In addition to shared meals and discussion meetings, the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais* launched publicity-generating initiatives. For example, in the presence of colonial notables the association members rededicated the Manneken Pis statue, which stood in the Parc de Boek as a replica of the well-

131 Capelle was heavily involved in the association in its early days. In his role as head of the *Service de la Population Noire*, he was in contact with the founding committee to assist it in drawing up a constitution; letter from *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais* to Capelle, 14 October 1950, AA/GG/16230.

132 Letter from *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais* to the colonial minister, 4 December 1950, AA/A54/Infopresse/51.

133 Press release on the foundation of the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais*, Congopresse, October 1950, AA/A54/Infopresse/51. The quoted text is a summary of the second article of the association constitution: *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais de Léopoldville, Projet du statuts, Constitution et buts de l'Association,* AA/GG/16230.

134 Description of the association by press officer André Scohy: *Création d'un Groupement Belgo-Congolais à Léopoldville*, AA/A54/Infopresse/51. For a detailed account of the racist segregation and contested intermediate zones in Léopoldville's colonial urban environment, see L. Beeckmans and J. Lagae, "Kinshasa's Syndrome-Planning in Historical Perspective: from Belgian Colonial Capital to Self-Constructed Megalopolis," in *Urban Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial and Post-Colonial Planning Cultures*, ed. C. N. Silva (London: Routledge, 2015), 204–207.

135 Press release on the first dinner of the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais*, Congopresse, 17 February 1951, AA/A54/Infopresse/51.

Fig. 12: Manneken Pis in Bateke attire. Official speech in the presence of the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais*. The first row includes the association's two presidents: André Scohy (first from left) and Antoine-Roger Bolamba (second from left).

known Brussels landmark.[136] Taking up a Brussels tradition of clothing the statue, they gave the "city's first citizen"[137] some new attire: a headdress of feathers, a dress of woven raffia and rings dangling from its ankle. In remembrance of the first inhabitants of the area in which the colonial capital had been erected, the Manneken Pis now wore the traditional garb of the Bateke.[138]

By demonstratively bringing together Congolese and European representatives of the capital's cultural scene, the association was consistent with the official rhetoric of reformed colonial policy.[139] In a letter, the colonial minister thus praised the "rapprochement between the whites and blacks of the Congo" as

136 Press release on the dedication of the Manneken Pis by the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais*, Congopresse, 10 March 1951, AA/A54/Infopresse/51.

137 Ibid.

138 Report by press agency *Agence Belge: Nouvelles d'Afrique: Léopoldville*, 30 January 1951.

139 Today, contemporary witnesses recall fondly the openness of the recurring encounters between Europeans and Africans; interview with Camille Auguste Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010.

manifest in the association.[140] It was not just the Brussels daily *Le Soir*,[141] but even *Drum* magazine in South Africa, which opposed the state doctrine of Apartheid, that considered the founding of the "multiracial literature and art association" in Léopoldville worthy of a laudatory article.[142]

The associations in Léopoldville such as the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments* and the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais* developed an appeal extending beyond the capital. Numerous reports and items of association news appeared in the *Voix du Congolais* and *Croix du Congo*, so that their readers were very well informed about the associational scene of the Belgian Congo.[143] The propagandistic staging presented the capital's associations to readers as exemplary sites of encounter between European administrators and Congolese elite, as places where colonial development was showcased. Through their idealization in the media, throughout the colony these associations rose to the status of benchmark for *évolué* associations. This awareness of the commitment of the capital's colonial administration to the associations encouraged Congolese actors elsewhere. That their expectations were quite often disappointed is evident in Antoine-Marie Mobé's troubled tenure as AES president.

Fighting a losing battle: the *évolué* association in Stanleyville

"Since our arrival in Stanleyville, when the old *évolué* association began to stagger towards its demise, we had been unwilling to believe what the elders here were wont to tell us about the local authorities."[144] This is how Antoine-Marie Mobé, who has already appeared in the present study on several occasions as a Congolese protagonist in the elite-making process, began an entry in his notebook of March 1950. There Mobé described a conversation with the local territo-

140 Letter from Colonial Minister Dequae to the presidents of the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais*, 28 November 1950, AA/A54/Infopresse/51.

141 N.n., "Groupement Belgo-Congolais," *Le Soir* (23 February 1951).

142 The report appeared in June 1951; D. C. Woodson, *Drum. An Index to "Africa's Leading Magazine" 1951–1965* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988), 159.

143 In the first sixteen months after the establishment of the *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais*, the *Voix du Congolais* published five lengthy reports, most of them featuring photographs. The *Croix du Congo* of 18 January 1953 also published a photograph of this association meal.

144 Notebook of Antoine-Marie Mobé, 22 March 1950, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé, Kinshasa.

rial official, which finally prompted him to resign as president of the AES and end his months-long efforts to set the *évolué* association on a new course.

In 1947, after completing his seminary studies, Mobé had moved to Stanleyville to take up a prestigious job at the postal service.[145] As an up-and-coming *évolué*, the revival of the association, which had been founded only in 1944 but was now inactive,[146] provided him with an opportunity to make his mark in a new environment as a representative of the vernacular elite. Mobé selected the *Voix du Congolais* as the media platform for its revitalization.

Mobé had a nuanced but unsparing view of the AES's problems. In the October 1947 issue he adduced several reasons for the association's dissolution and thus exposed the fraught situation in the Belgian Congo's third largest city.[147] First, he criticized the tensions between long-established and incomer *évolués*. He was thus addressing a conflict that had gone unmentioned in the *Voix du Congolais*, one that ran counter to the colonial propaganda of a supra-ethnic Congolese elite. Fully in the idiom of official elite discourse, Mobé called on the residents of Stanleyville to leave such animosities behind them and, as a united elite, to play an active part in the country's fate: "We ask our *évolué* friends to renounce the spirit of the clan, tribe and region, in order to think exclusively of our community of race and skin colour. May they think about the fact that we all have to make up the Congolese elite and lay the ground for the Congo of tomorrow."[148]

But Mobé's critique was also aimed at the local colonial administration. As he saw it, the officials were neglectful of the *évolués*, so they too were responsible for the fact that Stanleyville was still a long way from "unity between us."[149]

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145 After Léopoldville and Elisabethville, Stanleyville was the third-largest urban settlement in the Belgian Congo, but was in fact a medium-sized town, with a population of just 40,000 in the early 1950s. But it grew rapidly by the time of independence in 1960 and already had 121,000 inhabitants in 1958. On the development and history of Stanleyville, see V. Pons, *Stanleyville. An African Urban Community under Belgian Administration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); H. Lanza, "Stanleyville, ville cosmopolite. La localisation des différents groupes dans l'espace urbain," in *Les mémoires du Congo. Le temps colonial*, ed. J.-L. Vellut (Gent: Snoeck, 2005).

146 On the association's history, see Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués*, 3 – 35; Tshonda and Verhaegen, *Lumumba: Jeunesse*, 199 – 205. The fact that the AES is the only *évolué* association that has been subject to a specific study is due to the membership of Patrice Lumumba, whose life has been the focus of many historians. For his study, Benoît Verhaegen was able to examine a range of documents in the Kisangani provincial archive that subsequently fell victim to looting.

147 A.-M. Mobé, "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 20 (October 1947): 877.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

At the same time, in his article Mobé advocated the communitization of the *évolués* into a supra-ethnic group and greater support for associations from the colonial state.

The *Voix du Congolais*, meanwhile, conveyed a different perspective on things. The editors added a comment to Mobé's article, describing association members as solely responsible for its inactivity. The newspaper dismissed his accusation against the colonial administration as an "unfounded assertion."[150] The conflicts in Stanleyville exposed by Mobé made a poor fit with the idealized worldview of the Léopoldville-based newspaper, which preferred to report on the blissful harmony prevailing in the capital as associations brought together Europeans and Congolese.

Given that the local colonial administration was partly responsible for the crisis of the AES, it comes as no surprise that after this rebuke Mobé piped up once again. In a "rebuttal" published later, he complained about the fact that his critique had been described as baseless and affirmed that he could attest personally to the administration's failings. He expressed surprise that the *évolués* of Stanleyville referred to his reporting as courageous. For, as he remarked sarcastically, did the *Voix du Congolais* not guarantee freedom of expression? Why then should authors have to fear repression? By evoking the self-image of the *Voix du Congolais*, Mobé lent his critique of the local colonial administration additional legitimacy. He was indignant that the officials had failed to respond to the prescribed written requests for association meetings. Those who nonetheless met, Mobé wrote, were viewed as rabble-rousers and threatened with imprisonment.[151]

This time the editors did not seek to correct Mobé's critique. Instead, two months later the *Voix du Congolais* reported that the governor of Léopoldville province had ordered a review of the incidents in Stanleyville.[152] The paper now praised Mobé as an "excellent colleague and friend."[153] With his appeal for help in the media, Mobé had caught the attention of the colonial government in the capital, which was disgruntled by its officials' failure to support, or even their tendency to impede, *évolué* associations in the provincial capitals.

Mobé had thus assured himself of the support of the *Voix du Congolais* and he convinced the editorial board of the local colonial administration's shortcom-

150 "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 20 (October 1947): 878.

151 A.-M. Mobé, "Réfutation," *Voix du Congolais* no. 29 (August 1948): 330.

152 "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 31 (October 1948): 432.

153 Ibid.

ings. The time had come to relaunch the AES. At a constitutive meeting in December 1948, Mobé was elected its new president.[154] The *Voix du Congolais* congratulated Mobé, "whose diligence and tenacity have been crowned with success" and called on the local administration to support the association.[155] That the newspaper publicly backed the new president is an indication that the refoundation of the AES had elicited no enthusiasm on the part of Stanleyville's local officials. When the election results and the constitution were submitted to the local territorial official, he refused to authorize the association.[156] He justified this with reference to procedural errors and reservations about an association secretary with a criminal record.[157] But Mobé was prepared for this gambit. Two years earlier, the official had used the same argument to force the association to cease its activities. Mobé had thus specified in the new constitution that members' legal transgressions ceased to be relevant if they had maintained a good reputation for a substantial period of time.

Four months after Mobé's election as AES president, the association was able to meet officially for the first time. While the territorial officials had been unable to torpedo the association itself, they exercised their right to monitor and influence its activities. The minutes of the subsequent general meetings bear witness to the severe conflict between President Mobé and the colonial officials, who also showed up, over the association's orientation. What Mobé had in mind was a body in which members bettered themselves and could intervene in public affairs. The representatives of the colonial administration, meanwhile, favoured a programme restricted to recreational activities.[158]

In view of the local colonial officials' resistance at the general meetings, Mobé summarily created a new body to help implement his plans. As the forerunner of a *cercle d'études*, the *comité consultatif* was meant to facilitate discussion of pressing social problems. It is important to mention that the meetings of the *comité consultatif* did not take place in secret. The first meeting, on 25 July 1949, was attended by colonial official Vanstichel, who worked for the provincial governor in the *Service de l'Information et de la Propaganda*. At the behest of the colonial government in Léopoldville, Vanstichel had been tasked with support-

154 Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués*, 39 – 40.
155 "Activités des cercles: Stanleyville," *Voix du Congolais* no. 35 (February 1949): 83.
156 Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués*, 41 – 42.
157 Ibid.
158 The following remarks are based on the minutes of AES meetings of 25 May 1949, 6 July 1949, 25 July 1949 and 27 July 1949. Excerpts of these are reprinted in Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués*, 45 – 49.

ing the association when the local authorities' resistance first came to light.[159] As Mobé is likely to have seen it, Vanstichel was an emissary of the *Voix du Congolais*, who provided him with backing as he set about the controversial process of transforming the association into a Congolese advocacy group.

Mobé's social engagement may have seemed exemplary to the *Voix du Congolais* in Léopoldville, which congratulated its "loyal colleague" on his "successful initiatives."[160] But the territorial officials saw him as a threat to their authority.

While the *Voix du Congolais* presented the Congolese public sphere with the AES's progress, association president Mobé was struggling behind the scenes with the colonial officials, who were seeking to defend their extensive local powers against the critical African elite. Mobé was the loser in this power struggle. It is likely that his interlocutor in the discussion with the "local authority"[161] cited at the start of this section, which led to his resignation, was the territorial administrator of the African quarter, Maurice Buysschaert.[162] According to Mobé's notes, during this conversation there was an escalation of the simmering dispute between him and the local administration over the association's character.[163] The official, these notes record, described the critical association president as a "revolutionary," as a slanderer of the administration who had no appreciation of its work at the local level. Rather than merely debating and criticizing, the official had suggested, the association itself ought to take action and, for example, help out with the drainage of a flooded riverbank. Mobé parried this proposal by echoing the territorial official's statement that the local administration had all problems under control. Why then would it need the association's help? The territorial official responded to this provocation by threatening to dissolve the AES.

Regardless of his composed and impersonal tone, Mobé's notebook entry articulates his shock at the humiliating treatment meted out to him as association president: "In light of this talk I assume that this authority is very probably unaware who it is dealing with! Many Europeans still treat us like children. They

159 A.-R. Bolamba, "Activité des cercles, Stanleyville," *Voix du Congolais* no. 45 (December 1949): 488; Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués*, 45.

160 Bolamba, "Activité des cercles," 488.

161 Notebook of Antoine-Marie Mobé, 22 March 1950, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé, Kinshasa.

162 Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués*, 50; Tshonda and Verhaegen, *Lumumba: Jeunesse*, 208.

163 For the following remarks, see notebook of Antoine-Marie Mobé, 22 March 1950, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé, Kinshasa.

think we are devoid of all capacity for reflection and judgement. This at least applies in the case of the aforementioned authority."[164]

It is unclear whether Mobé's accusatory lines ever made it beyond the relative safety of his notebook. On the one hand, the interpolated references to articles in the *Voix du Congolais* create the impression that Mobé was working on the draft of a publication.[165] He scored through, reworked or reformulated certain parts several times over. That the text was not published does not mean that Mobé did not send it off, as his faith in the support of the authorities in Léopoldville seems to have remained firm despite it all. It may have been one of the articles that succumbed to the General Government's censorship for showing its colonial officials in too negative a light. On the other hand, it is conceivable that Mobé balked at publication out of fear of repression. In his notebook, he remarked that he would rather not provide a detailed account of the insults he had suffered. He feared that no one would believe him.[166]

When the initial tailwind from Léopoldville had tailed off, Mobé succumbed to the pressure emanating from the local authority and opted to step out of the public spotlight represented by the AES by resigning his post. In one of his didactic talks, which he had given shortly before while still association president, he tackled the notion of honour, which, he stated, was an innate aspect of every human being and must be defended against injury.[167] By resigning, Mobé may in part have been attempting to retain his honour as a responsible citizen – his conversation with the colonial official may have been as much humiliation as he was willing to take. For him, the official's demand that he refrain from interfering in the administration's work was an unacceptable capitulation to the local authorities' power.

In Stanleyville, the AES was beset by crisis just a year after its refoundation, and in Léopoldville issues of the *Voix du Congolais* went to press that disseminated an antiquated and outlandish account of what had happened. The media coverage of Mobé's resignation was characterized by a failure to mention the dispute with the local administration. Reports repeatedly highlighted conflicts between association members as the cause of the new crisis, maintaining an appearance

164 Ibid.

165 The same notebook contains drafts of articles by Mobé that later appeared in the *Voix du Congolais* or other newspapers. See for example Mobé, "Du rôle véritable," 470 – 471.

166 Notebook of Antoine-Marie Mobé, 22 March 1950, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé, Kinshasa.

167 This talk was published; see A.-M. Mobé, "La fidelité à la parole donnée," *Voix du Congolais* no. 48 (March 1950).

of integrity on the part of the colonial officials.[168] In fact, the *Voix du Congolais* called on the *évolués* of Stanleyville to embrace an "*entente cordiale*"[169] and assailed their envy and bitterness. But even Mobé published no public criticism of the local administration, either in the *Voix du Congolais* or the *Croix du Congo*, for which he wrote the "Echos de Stanleyville" section from June 1950. Instead, he too criticized the association members and, in particular, expressed his disappointment at the hostility of the *évolués* of Stanleyville towards newcomers. In a schoolmasterly tone, Mobé wrote:

> May the residents of Stanleyville, that is, those who refer to themselves as natives of Stanleyville and, on the basis of this supposed quality, disregard and envy all strangers while excluding them from the leading posts in their associations, finally understand just what they would be capable of achieving without the generous and dedicated collaboration of these so-called strangers.[170]

For Mobé, these spats between association members, which occurred on the basis of ethnicity, meant that the AES had not earned the right to be known as an *évolué* association: "This is indicative of the fact that they are not yet fully developed."[171]

Despite his defeat as association president, Mobé by no means abandoned his Sisyphean task as an exemplary and engaged *évolué*. The former seminarian made the civilizing mission his personal mission. He continued to champion the self-perfection and continued education of the *évolués* through the associations,[172] for "the number of the developing who have benefitted from schooling and training is still very limited."[173] Mobé's references to the need for *évolués* to work together with the Europeans to civilize the uneducated masses and modernize the country indicates that he must have seen the hostile territorial official merely as a local Stanleyville aberration.[174] His faith in colonial development appears to have been unwavering.

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168 A.-R. Bolamba, "Note de la rédaction," *Voix du Congolais* no. 49 (April 1950): 242.

169 Ibid.

170 A.-M. Mobé, "Echos de Stanleyville," *Croix du Congo* (4 March 1951).

171 Ibid.

172 His notebook contains the draft of an article on the role of associations, which Mobé had already composed four days after his resignation as association president. But this ode to the association as a site of self-perfecting and close cooperation with the colonial administration was only published three years later; Mobé, "Du rôle véritable."

173 A.-M. Mobé, "Entente dans les cercles dits d'Évolués," *Croix du Congo* (25 June 1950).

174 Ibid.

At the same time, Mobé began to pursue new associational projects less dependent on the goodwill of the local colonial administration. Also, in the summer of 1951, he founded two associations in Stanleyville, both of which he headed as president: first the *Association des Postiers de la Province Orientale* (APIPO), which, with the tried-and-tested tools of talks and recreational activities, was dedicated to the self-improvement of Congolese postal workers and to fostering their work ethic,[175] and, second, the local branch of the ADAPES, the association for former Scheut mission school pupils. For his new association projects Mobé had now found a close ally, who supported his foundation of the new bodies and held the post of vice-president in both of them. I am referring to a 26-year-old and highly ambitious colleague from the postal service, who had been on the AES committee since 1951 and, as a correspondent for the *Croix du Congo*, rapidly made his entrance into the colonial public sphere: Patrice Lumumba.[176]

When Mobé got himself transferred to Coquilhatville in 1953, Lumumba followed in his footsteps. He took over from Mobé as president of the APIPO and ADAPES and continued his work as correspondent for the *Croix du Congo* in Stanleyville.[177] If we examine Lumumba's other activities in Stanleyville, we find that he was also heir to the controversial figure of Mobé in another sense: he performed a perilous tightrope act as an exemplary *évolué* who sought to maintain a balance, *vis-à-vis* the colonial authorities, between loyalty and a critical mindset, between ambition and challenging views. As presidents of the AES, Mobé and Lumumba eschewed blind allegiance to the siren song of colonial change. Instead, they amplified the rhetoric of colonial reform and thus challenged the local representatives of the colonial state.

But what does the example of Mobé's presidency of the AES tell us about the local outworking of the state-backed and much propagandized Congolese associations? It is worth briefly recapitulating the key conflicts and determining their general significance.

First, the efforts of Congolese to transform *évolué* associations, sponsored by the colonial state, into sites of elite formation that allowed members to articulate their views and facilitated social participation, entailed a certain risk. What the

175 Ibid., 40 – 41.

176 Tshonda and Verhaegen, *Lumumba: Jeunesse*, 209 – 210. On Lumumba's work as a correspondent for the *Croix du Congo*, see: Mutamba-Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba*.

177 P. Lumumba, "Nouvelles de l'ADAPES Stanleyville," *Croix du Congo* (14 February 1954). As president of the APIPO postal association Lumumba edited a publication akin to the *Voix du Congolais* in its orientation and content, though the layout was less professional and most articles were on the work ethic.

General Government propagated with the help of the *Voix du Congolais* could trigger a power struggle between association members and colonial officials over who was in charge at the local level. Elite actors' insistence that the state take steps to develop responsible, politically mature citizens laid bare the local balance of power within the framework of colonial rule. The contradiction between theory and practice, inherent in associational culture as an institution of state elite formation, can fairly be described as glaring. Certainly, Mobé was quite capable of using the *Voix du Congolais* as a public platform for evaluating whether colonial promises had been kept, and his tenacity compelled the editors and the General Government to support him. In Stanleyville, however, such backing from the capital was of limited use. Mobé had to find out the hard way what it meant to gear one's actions to the promises of colonial reforms as propagated in the *Voix du Congolais*. With his combative articles, he made himself vulnerable to repressive measures by the local colonial authority. And the territorial officials, with their substantial powers, had no intention of allowing Mobé to turn the *évolué* association into a forum for African critique and demands. While the newspaper in Léopoldville published avowals of solidarity and the General Government despatched a representative of the provincial government's Information Department to assist Mobé, ultimately these acts were merely symbolic and turned out to be half-hearted forms of support.

In Stanleyville, the rhetoric of colonial development was subordinate to the interests of the colonial order – in reality, the *Voix du Congolais* was powerless. Those who saw themselves as members of the elite and were eager to improve both their character and social position could rapidly come up against the glass ceiling of the colonial hierarchy. In the dispute over the AES we can discern once again the conflict over the local implementation of colonial reforms, along with the concomitant expectations and disappointments of the Congolese elite.

Second, the example of the AES demonstrates that the social spaces of the *évolué* associations were potentially conflictual ones. They were meeting places for graduates of secondary schools and employees in prestigious roles from several different regions, whose otherness was meant to be overcome through their designation as *évolués* or elite. The discussion of the treatment of "strangers"[178] in the AES shows that ethnicity and regional background were parallel and highly potent identificatory concepts that undermined the *évolués*' communitization. Provenance played a major role in the *évolué* milieus of the colonial cities. A number of studies have revealed that ethnicity was accentuated against the background of these heterogenous social spaces of encounter, if it was not in

178 P. Lumumba, "La question des 'étrangers,'" *Croix du Congo* (18 March 1951).

fact experienced in the cities for the first time.[179] As an association president who was also a newcomer to the city, Mobé lacked local backing, and here he shared the fate of many well-educated Congolese who were installed in administrative offices throughout the colony but could build up little local support. Over the course of the 1950s, associational sociability in the cities of the Belgian Congo increasingly transformed into a laboratory for the cultivation of regional and ethnic patterns of belonging, in which the Congolese elite too, in a climate of anti-colonial politicization, was later to discern a means of enhancing its power.[180]

Illegitimate and disreputable sociability

The "moralization of leisure time"[181] is Tim Couzens's term for the practice of colonial officials, missionaries and firms of imparting to the African elite certain values through recreational opportunities. Here associations played a leading role.[182] Certainly, missions and the colonial state expected recreational associations to be an instrument of social control and colonial subject formation. But they were also an instrument they sometimes – albeit unintentionally – allowed to slip from their grasp. For however much it was meant to control and moralize, this sociability, though to a limited degree, created areas of freedom that at times ran counter to the propaganda of elite-making policy.[183] What the Congolese elite were supposed to do when not working and what they actually did were not always congruent.

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179 There is a wealth of studies referring to the construction and potency of ethnicity in the urban settlements of Africa, so I shall mention only overviews here; D. Anderson and R. Rathbone, "Urban Africa. Histories in the Making," in *Africa's Urban Past*, eds. D. Anderson and R. Rathbone (Portsmouth: James Currey, 2000), 8; A. Eckert, "'Unordnung' in den Städten. Stadtplanung, Urbanisierung und koloniale Politik in Afrika," *Periplus. Jahrbuch für außereuropäische Geschichte* 6 (1996); B. Freund, *The African City: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91; C. Lentz, "'Tribalismus' und Ethnizität in Afrika. Ein Forschungsüberblick," *Leviathan* 23 (1995): 120 – 123. For a general account of this topic, see A. Keese, *Ethnicity and the Colonial State. Finding and Representing Group Identification in a Coastal West African and Global Perspective (1850 – 1960)* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

180 Verhaegen, *Les premiers manifestes politiques*, 55.

181 T. Couzens, "Moralizing Leisure Time. The Transatlantic Connection and Black Johannesburg 1918 – 1936," in *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa*, eds. S. Marks and R. Rathbone (London: Edison-Wesley Longman, 1982).

182 On the case of football in colonial Senegal, see Baller, *Spielfelder*, 56 – 62.

183 This applied generally to Africans' leisure time under colonial rule; E. Akyeampong and C. Ambler, "Leisure in African History: An Introduction," *International Journal of African History Studies* 35, no. 1 (2002): 5.

The contested meaning of the term "pleasure," which appeared in the name of many *évolué* associations in the Belgian Congo, was laid bare in the discourse and practice of associational life. The *Voix du Congolais* sought to resolve the antagonism between edification and entertainment in a comment on a reader's letter whose author complained that the published association news provided more information on elections than on substantive debates.[184] Here the newspaper, close to the colonial state, added its voice to the criticism of the lack of association activity while also lamenting that in many places dancing and alcohol were the order of the day. But the editors did not have a fun-free zone in mind either: "The associations should not be puritanical places where laughter is forbidden."[185] They called for a middle course between virtue and entertainment. What this squaring of the circle might look like in practice they left to the associations themselves.

Members of the *Cercle Gouverneur* Pierre Ryckmans in Lisala, discussed earlier in connection with the visit of Antoine-Roger Bolamba, complained about the misappropriation of association funds. In a letter to the responsible colonial official, they accused the association president of using the membership fees to play the "grandee" and entertain his lovers.[186] There is a series of these reports in an alarming tone in the elite newspapers warning of the blurring of the boundary between the moralizing elite associations on the one hand and the indecent bars on the other. In the *Croix du Congo*, one reader reported from Tshimbane that the associations in the colony's "little outposts"[187] left a lot to be desired, because fewer educated Congolese lived there than in the cities. Rather than acquiring books and improving themselves, members dedicated themselves to alcohol and dancing. "Rather than forging the black elites," he wrote with a view to the association as the official site of elite formation, "we run the risk of training up developed drunkards."[188] Another reader, while advocating support for the "backwoodsmen," noted that the popularity of alcohol was a problem affecting urban dwellers as well.[189]

And yet it seems that the above-mentioned alcohol consumption in the *évolué* associations was often tolerated as a means of preventing supposedly worse

184 "Activité des cercles: Stanleyville," *Voix du Congolais* no. 39 (June 1949): 255.

185 Ibid.

186 Letter from an "évolué" to the district commissioner of Congo Ubangi, 29 December 1947, AA/GG/7921.

187 "Points de vue de nos lecteurs: Cercle dans les petits postes," *Croix du Congo* (28 September 1952).

188 Ibid.

189 "A propos de cercles dans des petits postes," *Croix du Congo* (9 November 1952).

behaviour. Even in associations initiated by missionaries, whose meetings were held on mission grounds, the focus was not always on cultural elevation. In Coquilhatville, for example, the Catholic mission ran the *Cercle Excelsior*, with a substantial membership of 549 in September 1953.[190] Its appeal was mainly due to its primary role as drinking place. Attaining membership was a simple matter of paying for one's drinks. Some members complained to the provincial governor about "this so-called association that is actually a bar,"[191] contending that nothing was known about the fate of its takings and that it lacked sanitary facilities.

Nonetheless, during his visit to Coquilhatville the editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, had words of praise for the controversial association: "This initiative by the missionaries keeps many young people away from the seedy entertainments of the native districts, where abuses of all kinds help bring the lowest of passions to fruition."[192] Bolamba saw the greater evil in those of Coquilhatville's associations that caused outrage due to their immoral practices: "Their *raison d'être* consists in the diversions of singing and dancing, [...] and their activities [...] boil down to ignominious drinking sessions."[193] Bolamba's remarks are reminiscent of a report produced by the General Government on the "Associations of the *Femmes Libres* and Bachelors (clerks)" in Coquilhatville's African districts.[194] It stated that the establishment of these illegal associations, with imaginative names such as Alaska and *Américaines*, was the doing of Congolese office workers employed in the colonial administration, who fit the general conception of a vernacular elite during working hours, but took time out from the moral precepts of colonial subject formation when work was over.[195] According to the report, the association was frequented by un-

190 Handwritten addendum of 5 September 1953 to a report on the *Cercle Excelsior* produced by the territorial official of Coquilhatville on 22 November 1950; AA/GG/11600.

191 Undated letter from association members to the governor of Équateur province, AA/GG/11600.

192 Antoine-Roger Bolamba, "Impressions de voyage," *Voix du Congolais* no. 49 (May 1950): 214.

193 Ibid., 213.

194 *Association femmes libres et de garcons (clercs) du CEC Coquilhatville* 1948, AA/GG/12532. We cannot rule out the possibility that Bolamba was the author of the report, given that he had stayed in Coquilhatville for a week around the same time, during his tour through the colony; letter from secretary general of the General Government to the territorial official in Coquilhatville, 15 September 1948, AA/GG/7921.

195 Ibid.; Bolamba, "Impressions de voyage," 213.

married women and sometimes even underage girls, who danced and sang "obscene songs" for the male guests.[196]

If we consider these examples in the round, it is evident that differing ideas about the organization of leisure time and masculinity collided within the associational landscape of the Belgian Congo, ideas underpinning different forms of respectability that coexisted within the vernacular elite.[197] On the one hand, we might refer to the respectability of the exemplary, "genuine" *évolués* keen to perfect themselves, who wished to be appreciated by the European milieu even in their leisure time. On the other hand, we have the respectability of the grandee and snob, which was the antithesis of a desirable lifestyle in idealistic elite discourse. A demonstrative display of unruly behaviour by association presidents could inspire outrage as well as popularity and allegiance among members.[198] In the latter case, recognition from Europeans, observing and commenting on associational sociability with wagging fingers, seems to have been of secondary importance.

Clearly, not everyone referred to as an *évolué* and addressed as the subject of elite formation could get anything out of the official association evenings, with their edifying talks and debates under the custodianship of European advisers. The social spaces of the bar and the association, kept separate from one another in elite discourse as ideal types, overlapped in cultural practice. Polygamy, indecent acts and drunkenness could be as much a part of the everyday pleasures of association life as talks and training courses. Hence, as core sites of colonial elite-making, associations sometimes became the kind of places they were supposed to keep their members away from.

Among the strange outgrowths of the associational landscape, in addition to the disreputable associations, were those social coalitions that called themselves associations while failing to satisfy the formal criteria laid down by the colonial administration. Behind this widespread phenomenon lay a form of associational

196 *Association femmes libres et de garcons (clercs) du CEC Coquilhatville* 1948, AA/GG/12532.
197 In colonial Rhodesia too, representatives of the educated elite fulminated against ordinary workers and their drinking halls, where immoral encounters took place between men and women; M. O. West, "Liquor and Libido: 'Joint Drinking' and the Politics of Sexual Control in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1920s-1950s," *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 3 (1997). But given the findings of the present study, the question that arises is to what extent, in Rhodesia as elsewhere, this was merely the discourse of dissociation typical of the elite, which feared for its respectability because some of its own members were also to be found visiting these drinking halls.
198 The latter was the reaction of most members of the *Cercle Van Gele* to the removal of their president due to disreputable conduct. See letter from Botamba to the policeman in Libenge, 16 August 1952; letter from Botamba to the territorial official of Libenge, 16 August 1952, AA/GG/6372.

mimicry, which provides us with an initial indication of how popular and worth emulating the associations were, even among those individuals who, due to their lack of status or inadequate education, could not take part in elite socialization. It is important to realize that the *évolué* associations were eye-catchers in Congolese towns and cities and their events often attracted onlookers. In Léopoldville, uninvited spectators of associational sociability even had their own nickname, *ngembo*, admirers or bats, because they were denied access but positioned themselves in such a way that they could follow the goings-on undisturbed.[199]

To conclude, then, I wish to explore a key question, one that the meagre material evidence does not allow us to answer conclusively but that cannot be ignored: to what extent did the cultural model of a Congolese elite serve as a role model for broader circles within society? After all, officially the goal of elite formation was for *évolué*s to act as disseminators, beyond their own milieu, of moral values and a way of life that were considered civilized. Ideally, the African elite was at all times supposed to provide what contemporary sociology, with the colonial elite in mind, understood as a "standard setting group."[200] In colonial ideology, *évolué* associations were meant to function as the poster child for civilized manners and emulate their historical role models from Europe, that is, associations that had ensured the spread of bourgeois ideas beyond their own milieu.[201]

In the relevant newspapers, however, Congolese authors repeatedly complained that the elite often failed to function as role models for their less educated compatriots, particularly in contexts of direct interaction. Here the elite assumed the arrogance common among Europeans towards those referred to as *indigènes*. Due to their simple clothing, representatives of the vernacular elite treated them as uncivilized, avoided contact, paraded their supposed cultural superiority by speaking grandiloquent French and used their educational edge to position themselves as superior.[202] But just because the Congolese elite failed

199 Maître Taureau began to talk about these uninvited spectators when presented with a relevant photograph. Interview with Maître Taureau, Kinshasa, 2 September 2010. Maître Taureau was a famous figure in the recreational culture of Léopoldville in the 1950s and organized, for example, beauty and dancing competitions in the Parc de Boek, with guests including senior officials in the colonial administration. The local press called him the "Elvis Presley of Léopoldville"; "Au baptême de notre fils 'Congo,'" *Congo* (6 April 1957): 6.

200 Nadel, "Concept of Social Elites."

201 On the appeal of bourgeois culture, see for example Kaschuba, "Bürgerlichkeit," 110.

202 On these incidents, see n.n, "Les noirs exploitent les noirs," *Voix du Congolais* no. 23 (February 1948): 81– 82; J.-E. Mupenda, "L'Évolué est-il maladroit?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 27 (June 1948).

to exhibit the kind of conduct apologists for elite formation considered exemplary does not mean they lost their aura as persons worth emulating.

I will briefly illustrate associational mimicry through examples that take us to Stanleyville and Léopoldville. The first example is from a study by Valdo Pons, who carried out eighteen months of field research in Stanleyville in 1952. Pons undertook a sociological study of new cities in colonial Africa, an emerging line of research at the time that was institutionalized chiefly by Max Gluckman and A. L. Epstein in Manchester[203] but was also prominently pursued by George Balandier.[204] Urbanization in Africa was a development that, after the Second World War, engendered a great need for expert knowledge on the part of the colonial administration, which social scientists were happy to provide.[205] Pons was one of several sociologists who, commissioned by UNESCO, carried out research in Stanleyville on processes of social adaptation in the urban context.[206] The Belgian colonial government's decision to welcome the international team of researchers to its territory not only furnished it with more hegemonic knowledge, but also signalled to the anti-colonialist UN, as sponsor of the project, that the Belgian Congo had nothing to hide.

Pons followed the "community study approach"[207] common at the time and investigated the social networks and communication processes in a settlement of ordinary workers. Though the residents could not be considered members of the educated *évolué* milieu of Stanleyville, Pons was struck by the great significance ascribed to the different levels of civility in everyday conversation: "It was common to hear two men discussing a third in terms such as he is 'a very civilized man,' he is 'only a little civilized,' he is 'not quite civilized,' he was 'civilized long ago,' and so forth."[208] Interviewees qualified people's personal lifestyle either as backward, using the Lingala term *kisendji*, or as civilized, *kizungu*, which

203 The research projects of the Manchester School, but also of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, are considered key forerunners of modern urban anthropology. For an overview, see U. Hannerz, *Exploring the City. Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 119–162.

204 G. Balandier, *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1955).

205 Urban researchers were one of the groups of experts active in colonial Africa after 1945. See Cooper, *Decolonization*, 373.

206 The research findings are brought together in an anthology; D. Forde, "Introduction," in *Aspects sociaux de l'industrialisation et de l'urbanisation en Afrique au Sud du Sahara*, ed. D. Forde (Paris: UNESCO, 1956).

207 Pons, *Stanleyville*, 5 and 132.

208 Ibid., 11.

means 'western' or 'European' in Swahili and in this case essentially denoted an urban way of life.[209]

Pons then observed social practices and symbolic acts, with the help of which ordinary workers assured themselves of their civility. A six-member group of neighbouring masons and carpenters between 26 and 50 years of age, for example, got together at irregular intervals for meetings that they called "association" and at which they had discussions, joked and drank. We have Pons to thank for a detailed description of the fun had by this group giving their get-togethers the sheen of official association meetings. All those present received an honorary title. There was a president, governor and district commissioner, as well as posts such as secretary and chairman, though members constantly swapped roles. Anyone arriving late or being called away too soon by his wife had to pay a fine. Though everyone lived close by, a self-proclaimed secretary informed members of the next meeting by post.[210] While Homi Bhabha discerns elements of mimicry and mockery in colonial subjects' appropriation of European ways of life,[211] here this performance seems to be extended – to ordinary workers who playfully usurp the posturing of the Congolese elite.

For Pons, this associational mimicry represented an attempt at self-reassurance and symbolic self-valorization: "the members of the 'club' saw themselves as a 'civilized' group acting in a 'civilized' way."[212] His study thus shows that associational sociability was received well beyond elite circles, as a form of social interaction associated with civility and prestige in the colonial situation.

But it was also the fascination exercised by ostentation and the appeal of holding office that fostered associational mimicry. An incident in the African quarter of Léopoldville brings this out once more. In the spring of 1953, the colonial administration followed up a lead concerning an unregistered group by the name of the Association of Gentlemen London Stell.[213] Its investigation brought to light a major misunderstanding. The responsible colonial official encountered a seven-member group of young Congolese who, as members of a savings association that had in reality been dissolved, gave each other imaginative and grandiose titles in the French language, though the official believed they were unaware of the terms' actual meaning. There was, for example, a "secretary of defence," a "secretary of the interior" and a "representative of great enjoyment

209 Ibid., 11–12 and 51.
210 Ibid., 152–153.
211 H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 81–86.
212 Pons, *Stanleyville*, 153.
213 Letter from R. Huberty, head of the *Service de la Population Noire* in Léopoldville, to the district commissioner of Moyen Congo, 27 May 1953, AA/GG/16543.

in Africa." In accordance with the regulations, the astonished official submitted his report to the local police, but he expressed opposition to the kind of criminal prosecution these young men would likely face due to their unauthorized association: "All this shows that these lads deserve six years of primary school rather than two months in prison." [214]

It is conceivable that the official's bafflement at the Association of Gentlemen London Stell was matched by its members surprise at the colonial administration's interest in their harmless associational mimicry. In Léopoldville, however, the authorities kept a weather eye even on insignificant bars if an unknown association was said to be gathering there. On closer consideration, however, such cases mostly involved a group of bar-goers who, after being paid, collectively handed over a certain amount to the proprietor so they could afford alcoholic drinks even at the end of the month, and in so doing addressed each other as president or secretary.[215]

The colonial state's control mania was a result of the authorities' fear that one of the many unofficial associations might be camouflage for a political and anti-colonial movement. Knowledge of this state of affairs must have spread among the Congolese elite: one respected resident of Léopoldville's African quarter, for example, played on this fear of subversive groups in order to ensure that the local administration prohibited an association he had come to find disagreeable.[216] He was outraged by its dance events that, according to him, disturbed not just the public peace but also domestic peace. To demonstrate to the colonial authorities the need for prompt action, he portrayed the disreputable revellers as the supposed nucleus of an armed independence movement of the kind that was in the ascendant at the time in other colonies: "Think of the MAU-MAU movement in KENYA. If they had seen it coming it would not have happened. But they waited too long to act."[217]

That unofficially established associations evaded the authorities' control is indicative not so much of anticolonial politicization or clandestine meetings as of the unintended side-effects of colonial subject formation, which sought to organize *évolués*' free time with the help of associations. The association became the shorthand symbol of the prestigious sociability of urban Congolese and was detached from its origin as a key site and instrument of control within the

214 Letter from assistant to territorial administrator A. Croonenborgh to R. Huberty, head of the *Service de la Population Noire* in Léopoldville, 27 May 1953, AA/GG/16543.

215 Letter from assistant to the territorial administrator in Léopoldville to the *Service de la Population Noire*, 9 September 1953, AA/GG/19596.

216 Letter from Hubert D. to chef de la cité indigène in Léopoldville, 22 July 1953, AA/GG/19596.

217 Ibid.

framework of colonial elite-making. Through its cultural appropriation by a wide range of social strata, the term "association" became synonymous with more or less regular meetings, which did not prevent people from imitating bureaucratic procedures from the world of associations or from marking social hierarchies through the ascription of associational posts. But the colonial administration learned only rarely of such situational and fluid forms of communitization. It is thus difficult to assess the precise extent to which the cultural concept of the association spread throughout society. The state project of fostering Congolese associations slipped right out of colonial officials' hands: it was so successful that they could no longer control it.

In sum, colonial subject formation in the social spaces of the associations was an ambivalent and highly conflictual process. First, the associations failed to achieve the declared goal of "social engineering," namely, to create a vernacular elite as a sociocultural melting pot. First and foremost, associational sociability fostered a process of splintering within that social group that was in fact supposed to grow together as a Congolese elite. The self-description as *évolués* may have been suited to the formulation of collective claims *vis-à-vis* the colonial state, as in the case of the introduction of status reform, but it was not an effective means of collective identification. Togetherness was less likely to highlight the prospect of affiliation to the Congolese elite than to foreground a shared background and ethnicity, common life paths and school careers, occupations and leisure pursuits, as well as notions of masculinity and morality. The imagined community of a supra-ethnic elite, which drew its social cohesive force from loyalty to the colonial state, was propagandized in the media[218] but thwarted in the social world.

Second, the colonial state failed to get what it wanted: total control of the communitization of the Congolese population and the organization of their leisure time. The sociability of the elite, whether in *évolué* associations or unofficial gatherings, sometimes evaded direct control and bore witness to its members' cultural tenacity.

Third, judged against the expectations raised in the elite periodicals, the *évolué* associations could cause disappointment in practice. The media portrayals of privileged sites of encounter between Europeans and Congolese and of a lively elite public sphere were not always congruent with what a fair number of ambitious association presidents experienced. Even in the associations themselves, representatives of the elite had very limited scope to help shape the Congo of tomorrow.

218 Domont, *Élite noire*, 122.

Considering these examples as a whole, we are left with the impression that their European patrons preferred to let associations get out of control rather than facing up to the demands made of the colonial state by critical presidents. Colonial officials' *laisser-faire* attitude towards associations that were places of entertainment more than sites of character-building, and their authoritarian crackdowns on critical association members, are testimony to the priority given to maintaining power. The acceptance that organized leisure pursuits tended to bring about the opposite of moralization was more than a sign of the colonial state's limited resources. Ultimately, its tacit tolerance entailed political benefits. It corroborated the idea that the *évolués*' development still left much to be desired and that their own conduct ran counter to their demand for legal equality with Europeans. This observation of the Congolese elite's lack of maturity was more conducive to the stabilization of the colonial order than the painful – because politically binding – admission that these might after all be potentially responsible and engaged citizens. In a context in which Belgium, by ratifying the UN Charter, had committed to gearing the colonized society's political participation to its maturity, the colonial authorities' loss of control over Congolese associational sociability was one thing above all else: a controlled loss of control.

Nowhere was discontent at the *évolué* associations' failings expressed as much as in the relevant elite periodicals. In the *Voix du Congolais*, for instance, Antoine-Roger Bolamba denied passive and nonconformist association members the right to call themselves elite and enjoy the status of *évolué:* "I hope that the commissions tasked with issuing the *Carte du Mérite Civique* take applicants' lifestyle into account."[219] This quotation speaks to the fact that normative elite discourse on civilizational maturity was crucial to the awarding of elite status. What the associations clearly illustrated was that the is and the ought of elite formation could often be poles apart.

219 Bolamba, "Note de la rédaction," 185.

The lives of others: selecting the Congolese elite (1948 – 1956)

A question of assimilation: the two-tier *évolué* status

His superior's assessment, the many articles in the press and his post as president in multiple associations were testimony to it. The contents of his kitchen and the arrangement of his living room left no room for doubt either: the selection committee was quite clear that they were dealing with a "genuine" *évolué*. In the summer of 1954, Patrice Lumumba was granted immatriculation and could now be entered into the "Register of the Civilized."[1] Like all those enjoying this legal status, from now on Lumumba no longer had to fear floggings, had equality with Europeans under penal law and was permitted to socialize and drink wine in European districts at night. In brief, he was a member of what colonial policy envisaged as the Congolese elite. But how were holders of this status selected and by whom? What were the key criteria? Who was granted this special legal status? And what advantages did the status reforms confer?

We may describe the practical implementation of these reforms as an attempt to translate the attributes of the "perfected black," as negotiated and propagated in the media, into bureaucratic test criteria. Ultimately, the selection procedure for the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation turned out to be a perfidious practice of colonial rule, with dual objectives. Despite the authorities' declared commitment to reforms, the goal was to uphold the social order while lending new legitimacy to the hegemony-stabilizing colonial distinction between European and African society.

It is important to reaffirm that, despite resistance from the European colonial milieu, the elite's demand for legal equality with Congo's European population managed to effect an initial shift of political direction. But the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique* in July 1948 was only a partial victory. As we will see later in more detail, the relevant decree merely promised several benefits for its holders, to be granted little by little, and the abolition, in part, of the *indigénat*. This did not, therefore, constitute full legal assimilation of the kind initially demanded by Congolese authors. The *carte du mérite civique* was no more than a transitional solution through which the architects of colonial policy wished to gain time in order to lay the ground for a more far-reaching reform of immatriculation. At the same time, therefore, Colonial Minister Wigny had instituted an ex-

1 Decree on immatriculation of 17 May 1952, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

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pert commission, headed by renowned colonial jurist Antoine Sohier. The commission was to come up with proposals to resolve the pressing issue of the "status of the civilized Congolese population."[2] This also ushered in the next round of controversy over the legal and cultural assimilation of the vernacular elite.

A good deal of time was to pass before the Sohier Commission put forward its suggested reform of immatriculation. Guided by the aspiration of creating a graduated legal system, one that had to reflect the differing developmental levels of the heterogenous group of *évolués* and serve as a gauge for the successive granting of rights, for two years the participating jurists discussed changes in specific areas of law.[3] For whom, on what premises, should legal discrimination be eliminated in the fields of family, education and citizenship, property and residence? In addition to this hierarchy of legal subjects, based on differing levels of civilizational development, the Sohier Commission also proposed a status for those Congolese "who have fully acquired European civilization."[4] For this group of the "assimilated," Sohier envisaged nothing less than legal equality with the European population across the board. The foundation here was to be a reform of immatriculation, which previously granted Africans equality with Europeans only in matters of civil law. The limited target of this expanded form of immatriculation was a small group of priests and future university graduates.

This proposed reform too caused controversy, not least as it had to be passed by the *Conseil de Gouvernement* in Léopoldville, which had rejected the *carte du mérite civique* in 1947. This time around, the publicly proclaimed goal of legal equality for an assimilated elite triggered a yet more vehement reaction in the European settler milieu. It led to the amalgamation of the settlers' associations, which had been operating on a regional basis, to create a colony-wide umbrella body known as the *Fédération des unions provinciales de colons au Congo et au Ruanda-Urundi* (FEDACOL).[5] In continuity with its predecessor organizations, which had emerged in the inter-war period, the FEDACOL championed a state-backed European settlement policy and demanded that Europeans' supremacy over the Congolese population be maintained through legal and economic priv-

2 Letter from Van Hove to colonial minister, 10 February 1948, AA/AI/4743//III/T/4.

3 On the following remarks, see Young, *Politics*, 79 – 87; Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 206; De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 142 – 144.

4 A. Sohier, "Le problème des indigènes évolués et la commission du statut des congolaises civilisés," *Zaïre* 8, no. 3 (1949).

5 For a detailed account of FEDACOL, see Lemarchand, *Political*, 83 – 88; De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 50 – 63.

ileges.[6] In the inter-war period, Belgian colonial policy had impeded the immigration of settlers, partly because the financially strong firms in the Congo, already struggling to recruit enough manpower, were eager to avoid the arrival of new competitors. After 1945, Brussels began to promote the settlement of Belgian farmers by providing them with financial aid.[7] But this was no more than symbolic politics when set against the demands issuing from the settlement organizations in Katanga for settlers' political integration, to be achieved through the establishment of parliaments and a form of suffrage limited to Europeans, akin to the situation in the British dominions. Settlers in Katanga sometimes went so far as to claim autonomous status, not least because tax revenues from the industrial firms in their province made up almost half of the colony's budget. While the FEDACOL purported to act as the voice of all settlers, its leaders were from Katanga.

On the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, the FEDACOL had a high-profile representative in the shape of its president Oscar Defawe, who had been resident in Katanga since the 1920s, initially as an administrative official and then as a businessman. Defawe was also considered a war hero, having joined the Belgian resistance in the Second World War and been interned for a time by the Gestapo.[8] During the session of summer 1950, Defawe presented himself as the "voice of a large number of colonizers and their children," who had "everything to lose" from the assimilation of an "immature people."[9] Defawe defended the status quo by pointing to the colonial wars raging in Indochina and Java, which he traced back to the emancipatory post-war reforms implemented by the other European colonial powers: "Do you believe, for instance, that France, Holland and Great Britain would pursue the same policy again if they could start over?," as Defawe asked the members of the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. He also lamented the limited political rights of the Belgian Congo's settlers. His reference to the Boers, of European descent, whose secessionist efforts in the resource-rich region of Transvaal around 1900 had initially been put down by the British empire but who had now proclaimed the independent Apartheid state of South Africa, was a clear threat from a prominent figure in the prosperous province of Katanga. "The assimila-

6 On the organization of settlers' interests since the 1930s, see Lemarchand, *Political*, 82 – 88.
7 B. Jewsiewicki, "Le Colonat agricole européen au Congo Belge, 1910 – 1960, problèmes politiques et économique," *Journal of African History* 20 (1979): 565 – 566.
8 G. Derkinderen, "Oscar Defawe," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 7-A, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1973).
9 The quotations in this paragraph are from a speech by Oscar Defawe to the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, 20 July 1950, published in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique coloniale devant l'assimilation des indigènes* (Brussels: mimeographed, 1951), 7 – 9.

tion of an anomalous assemblage of so-called *évolués*," as Defawe concluded his combative speech, "would entail premature emancipation and the tyranny of a small minority."

That Sohier's outline project had been submitted to the *Conseil de Gouvernement* just a few days before it met, was used by other anti-reform members as a pretext for postponing the decision until the next year. But in light of the warnings given by some representatives of Congolese interests against any new disappointment for the vernacular elite, finally the *Conseil de Gouvernement* acceded to the governor general's request to pass the draft reform on to the conseils de province for debate in the meantime. Within just three months, their assessment was communicated to the *Députation Permanente*, instituted within the General Government in 1947, in order to provide the Colonial Ministry with a recommended course of action as soon as possible.[10] Through this unprecedented procedure, Governor General Eugène Jungers was trying to retain the colonial government's control over assimilation policy and to expedite a decision before the next sitting of the *Conseil de Gouvernement*. Instead, he lost all control over such matters.

While the provincial councils discussed the Sohier Commission's proposal, opponents of the policy of assimilation from the European settlers' milieu readied themselves for action. Those constituting the "thin white line"[11] feared above all the loss of their distinctiveness, the delegitimization of their supremacy within colonial ideology. For them, legal assimilation was merely the first step towards political self-determination for Congolese, which threatened to turn the European minority into a political minority as well. The lack of a political say was a major cause of concern for the 40,000 Belgians in the Congo, who lost their right to vote as temporary residents of the colony.[12] In addition to technical impediments, the colonial state identified the high proportion of non-Belgian Europeans in the Congo as a reason for this denial of a core component of Belgian citizenship. After 1945, the potential to exercise a political influence was limited to the representatives of interest groups on the councils serving the various ad-

10 Sohier, "Le problème des indigènes," 142.

11 This is the term used by historian Anthony Kirk-Greene to describe the numerically small stratum of European administrators in the colony; Kirk-Greene, A., *The Thin White Line: The Size of the Colonial Service in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). It is equally apt for settler colonies with a larger European population. See C. Marx, "Siedlerkolonien in Afrika. Versuch einer Typologie," in *Rassenmischehen – Mischlinge – Rassentrennung. Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich*, ed. F. Becker (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004).

12 R. Lemarchand, "The Limits of Self-Determination: The Case of the Katanga Secession," *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 3 (1962): 407; Jewsiewicki, "Le Colonat."

ministrative levels.[13] Hence, Brussels was worried not just about the loyalty of the vernacular elite, but also about the settlers' consent. One of the key goals of colonial policy was to stymie secessionist ambitions, especially in the economically important southern provinces, which were also the ones with the greatest number of European settlers. The Colonial Ministry looked on with concern as the white settlers in neighbouring Rhodesia, taking South Africa as their role model, mobilized for political independence under white leadership.[14] In Angola too, bordering Congo in the southwest, the self-confidence of the Portuguese *colonatos* was growing; while they had no right to vote, after the Second World War, in contrast to Belgian policy, the state supported their settlement, so that by 1950 they had almost doubled in number, to just under 80,000.[15] Belgian politicians with a focus on colonial policy feared for good reason that the region of Katanga was not only geographically nearer to the Rhodesian capital of Salisbury and Portuguese Luanda than to Léopoldville, but that it was also closer in ideological and political terms.

Against this background, it is hardly surprising that the granting of equality with Europeans to selected Africans, as envisaged in Sohier's immatriculation reform, sparked off an intense debate. European and Congolese spokesmen, segregated but keeping a close eye on one another, engaged in trench warfare in the media. In September 1950, the *Union agricole du Kivu* (UNAKI) warned of the "fatal consequences"[16] of assimilation. In a press release published at the same time, the *Union pour la Colonisation* (UCOL), the regional settlers' association in Katanga, insisted on the differences between Europeans and Africans, which were not interpreted as biological, but as comparably insurmountable. According to this organization, the two groups were still divided by moral values that had evolved over the course of history and were culturally transmitted: "The Congolese [...] readily emulates the good example, but his ancestors have left him no spiritual or material legacy whatsoever that would allow him to play an active part in the modern world."[17]

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13 See Lemarchand, *Political*, 75 – 76.

14 On the Rhodesian settlers and their struggle for independence, culminating in the proclamation of the Republic of Rhodesia in 1965, see J. L. Fisher, *Pioniers, Settlers, Aliens, Exiles. The Decolonisation of White Identity in Zimbabwe* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2010), 1 – 6.

15 Albertini, *Dekolonisation*, 596.

16 UNAKI communication of 20 September 1950, reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 21 – 23.

17 UCOL Communiqué no. 245, 20 September 1950, reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 25.

These groups directed their ire against Belgian politicians pursuing colonial policies while lacking awareness of local realities and allowing themselves to be driven by "UN alarmism."[18] In addition to the settlers, other influential voices from Katanga also spoke out against the Sohier reform. In a detailed statement on Sohier's proposal, the CEPSI research institute in Elisabethville, which specialized in indigenous policy issues, raised the question of why the colonial state was entering into such a conflictual debate on legal equality in the first place, given that the target group of assimilated Congolese, made up of priests and secondary school graduates, was so small.[19] One day before the decision of the *Députation Permanente* on status reform, the cardinal of Katanga, Mgr. Hemptinne, stated his views in the conservative *Essor du Congo*. He referred to assimilation as "premature" and advocated a form of immatriculation extending only to equality under civil law, as the 74-year-old clergyman had himself called for in the interwar period as a leading member of the CPPI.[20]

While influential sections of the European milieu expressed their opposition in newspaper articles and press releases, it was not long before Congolese authors responded. The *Voix du Congolais* was still the key media forum where authors could aid the supporters of status reform by arguing that their developmental level made legal equality indispensable. One of the leading exponents of legal assimilation was Antoine Omari, originally from the eastern province of Kivu, who was now a bookkeeper at the colony's most important construction firm, Synkin, in Léopoldville and a leading member of elite groupings such as the aforementioned *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments* and the *Union des Intérêts Sociaux Congolais* (UNISCO), a Congolese advocacy group close to the ADAPES. Omari legitimized his demands based on the civilizing mission of Belgian colonialism and invoked King Leopold II: "The time has surely come, [...] to open the door to assimilation, *terminus ad quem* of the humanitarian goals our ruler Léopold II has assigned to us."[21]

Compared with the flood of articles published in 1945 at the start of the debate on *évolué* status, initially the authors writing for the *Voix du Congolais* commented on the work of the Sohier Commission rarely and with great circumspec-

18 P. Dechamps, "Quos vult perdere Jupiter dementat ... Un joli travail," *Kasai*, 14 October 1950, reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 47–49, 48.

19 CEPSI statement on immatriculation, 28 September 1950, in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 28–32.

20 J. F. Hemptinne, "Remarque concernant les projets de Décret sur l'immatriculation," *Essor du Congo*, 25 November 1950, reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 52–56.

21 A. Omari, "A propos de la Carte du mérite Civique," *Voix du Congolais* no. 51 (June 1950).

tion.[22] Subsequent to the resistance on the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, however, their reportage regained a combative tone. In the October 1950 issue, editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba argued that while one could never make "a black into a white," it was beyond doubt that "henceforth, some Belgian Africans are already comparable with their custodians."[23] From this point forward, Congolese authors reminded the opponents of assimilation of the noble goals of the Belgian colonial project. In the same issue, the editors published a selection of articles composed by correspondents in reaction to the publicly aired resistance within the settlers' milieu. In addition to contributions from the abovementioned Omari, these included an article by Jean-Pierre Dericoyard, another member of the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments*. Following a career as a high-level clerk in the private sector, Dericoyard had built up a lucrative furniture business in Léopoldville and was one of the few *évolués* to succeed as a merchant.[24] He assailed the critics of immatriculation as "NEGROPHOBES."[25] Dericoyard argued deftly against the idea of an insurmountable gulf between the cultural and moral beliefs of Europeans and Africans as anchored by UCOL in the two groups' developmental history. If the spread of civilization in Europe as initiated by the Romans had taken 2,000 years, then this was solely due to the "slow development of this era." The colonized countries, by contrast, who were now in contact with the "previously civilized,"[26] would acquire the benefits of civilization far more rapidly. While the opponents of assimilation sought to delay reforms, then, representatives of the Congolese elite tried to accelerate the pace of change.

In light of the increasingly polemical tone in colonial newspapers with a European readership, culminating in the headline "The assimilated and the cannibals," Antoine-Roger Bolamba called on European authors to embrace reason and common sense.[27] With a view to the disparaging remarks made in the media, Bolamba wrote that "we wonder bitterly why some Europeans insist on refusing to develop." For a "sincere, cordial and fraternal cooperation between

22 N. D. L. R., *Voix du Congolais* no. 40, July 1949, 267. For a similar wait-and-see approach, see n.n., "A propos du statut de la population congolaise civilisé," *Voix du Congolais* no. 41 (August 1949): 297 – 299.

23 A.-R. Bolamba, "Assimilation," *Voix du Congolais* no. 55 (October 1950): 573.

24 Artigue, *Qui sont*, 63.

25 J.-P. Dericoyard, "A propos du problème de l'assimilation des congolais," *Voix du Congolais* no. 55 (October 1950).

26 Ibid., 577.

27 A.-R. Bolamba, "La presse européenne et les Congolais," *Voix du Congolais* no. 57 (December 1950).

the two races," it was not just Congolese that had to work on themselves but Europeans too.[28] The *Voix du Congolais* portrayed the European settlers as the perpetual men of yesterday, who had fallen behind the times with their critique of reform. The self-confident tone of these articles penned by the distinguished representatives of the vernacular elite in Léopoldville, who were close to the progressive forces within the colonial administration, was perceived as overblown by authors associated with the settlers' lobby. The newspaper was supposed to be controlled by the colonial government, as one spokesman for the settlers of Katanga remarked indignantly in the *Kasai* daily newspaper.[29]

Once again, it is important to bear in mind that the Congolese intervention in the debate on assimilation was the work of a numerically small educated elite. At this point in time, the number of permanent and freelance contributors to the *Voix du Congolais* was just under two hundred, while its monthly print run was less than 5,000 copies. But as representatives of the *évolués*, the authors spoke on behalf of the just under 60,000 Congolese who had by now attended secondary school and were doing non-manual work.[30] These authors erroneously assumed, however, that the debate was concerned with their own legal equality. For the Sohier plan for immatriculation was geared exclusively towards priests and the future graduates of universities. While the writing elite staked out their claim to immatriculation by highlighting their development, their European opponents furiously denied these "pen-pushers"[31] this right.

The assessments made by the provincial councils and the *Députation Permanente* ultimately revealed the strong influence of the settlers' lobby, whose objections found reflection in their statements. Not only did the settlers' representatives dominate in the provincial councils, but the particularly polemical Oscar Defawe also sat on the *Députation Permanente*, composed of three colonial officials and six lobbyists. While both forums welcomed the *évolués*' efforts to achieve cultural assimilation, the legal equality demanded in the Sohier Commission's draft reform met with categorical rejection.[32] In December 1950, the

28 Bolamba, "Assimilation," 574.

29 P. Dechamps, "Quos vult perdere Jupiter dementat ... Un joli travail," *Kasai*, 14 October 1950, reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 48.

30 On the figures, see Van Wing, "La formation," 9; Chambre des représentants, *Rapport sur l'administration de la colonie du Congo Belge pendant l'année 1951 présenté aux chambres législatives* (Brussels: Ministere des affaires africaines, 1952).

31 P. Dechamps, "Toujours l'assimilation ... Il faut être juste," *Kasai*, 8 September 1951, reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 129–132, 129.

32 Statements appeared in *Courrier d'Afrique* (28 Novermber 1950). See Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 211; Young, *Politics*, 81–82.

Députation Permanente merely agreed to the principle of immatriculation, while limiting the associated benefits in terms of legal equality to civil law. Further, the individual rights of a yet to be defined group of assimilated Congolese were to be extended with the help of decrees. The circle of potential candidates for immatriculation was also expanded.[33] This watered-down reform proposal from the *Députation Permanente* was then passed to the Colonial Ministry in Brussels, where it was to be reviewed by the *Conseil Colonial*.

Meanwhile, the speech given by Governor General Eugène Jungers at the opening of the *Conseil de Gouvernement* in July 1951 caused a new stir. In his remarks on elite-making policy, he recapitulated the recommendations of the *Députation Permanente* on the Sohier reform, but continued to hold out the prospect of legal equality for the assimilated.[34] Jungers thus left open what the Colonial Ministry's decision on this issue would ultimately be. He saw the task of future policy as the elimination of discrimination against Congolese and appealed for the European population to keep an open mind. The anti-reform settlers' milieu viewed his dictum that "the hand extended too late risks being declined" as a disturbing declaration of intent.

Jean Sepulchre, editor of the *Essor du Congo* in Elisabethville, which was close to the settlers, ranted that "the Belgian hand has pulled the indigenous masses up out of their barbarism, leading them to material improvements and their elite to moral and intellectual progress."[35] He accused the governor general "of breaking, in an oddly festive way, with the traditional method of the slow but sure development of our charges."[36] The lobbying of those opposed to reform in Katanga now expanded to Brussels, where the Colonial Ministry had the power of decision. In a memorandum, the members of the Katanga Chamber of Industry and Commerce personally informed the colonial minister that the assimilation advocated by the governor general would be impossible to implement.[37] FEDACOL, which now had a lobbying office in Brussels, sent the colonial minister a press review featuring newspaper articles from the previous one-and-a-half years, so that the "colonial public's view of assimilation" would be considered

33 Ibid.; De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 146.

34 "Texte du discours prononcé par M. Gouverneur Général Jungers lors de l'ouverture de la Session de 1951 du Conseil de Gouvernement," *Voix du Congolais* no. 66 (September 1951): 477–502.

35 J. Sepulchre, "A la croisée des chemins," *Essor du Congo* (8 August 1951), reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 96–100, here 99.

36 J. Sepulchre, "Le ministre des colonies parmi nous," *Essor du Congo* (18 August 1951), reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 116.

37 De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 28.

when the decisions were made. In the foreword, FEDACOL president Albert Maus, a plantation owner from the Belgian mandate of Urundi, warned against giving "a bunch of individuals of an inferior civilizational, intellectual and moral state of development" equal status with Europeans, who were "very aware of the superiority of their Western civilization." He accused those politicians concerned with colonial policy of caving in to "a few thousand impatient *évolués*," who "are convinced that assimilation is their fate." Maus warned against "the hazardous policy of a far-off and physically shielded legislature, inspired by a combination of ideals and ignorance of the realities."[38]

In March 1952, after several rounds of consultation on the Sohier reform, the *Conseil Colonial* backed the conservative compromise proposal put forward by the Députation Permamente. The advisory body recommended to the Colonial Ministry, first, a reformed version of immatriculation, which guaranteed equality under civil law to selected Congolese. Second, together with holders of the *carte du mérite civique*, the immatriculated were to be placed on an equal footing with Europeans under penal law.[39] But the *Conseil Colonial* rejected legal assimilation across the board. The goal of colonialism had never been to turn Africans into Europeans, as the minutes of its proceedings baldly stated.[40] The immatriculation subsequently introduced by the colonial minister in May 1952 was a typically Belgian balancing of interests, a compromise solution that yielded to pressure from the settler milieu but could still present the vernacular elite with a result.

In the *Voix du Congolais*, once again the Congolese authors toed the line and embraced the political compromise. The departure from legal equality went unmentioned in the commentaries, with Antoine-Roger Bolamba loyally welcoming the "flexible approach of immatriculation."[41] Omari, shortly before a leading advocate of complete assimilation, went so far as to call the *Conseil Colonial*'s decision "excellent news" and rejoiced that "assimilation is assured."[42] As with the *carte du mérite civique*, in view of this meagre reform of immatriculation the authors writing for the *Voix du Congolais* did the only thing they could do in the General Government's press organ: they kept quiet about what they had demanded and welcomed the watered-down but still hard-won reform as an irrev-

38 A. Maus, "Avant-propos," reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 2–5, 5.

39 Report by the Conseil Colonial, reprinted in *Courrier d'Afrique* (26 March 1952).

40 *Rapport du Conseil Colonial* (Brussels: 1952), 1175–1179, quoted in De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 147.

41 A.-R. Bolamba, "La députation permanente et l'assimilation des autochtones," *Voix du Congolais* no. 60 (March 1951): 116.

42 A. Omari, "Une excellente nouvelle," *Voix du Congolais* no. 74 (May 1952): 257.

ocable political decision made in Brussels. They remained *évolués* loyal to the party line.

When Antoine Sohier had taken over as head of the status commission, he saw the *évolués* problem as rooted in the fact that they had answered the call to civilize but now found themselves facing a "closed door."[43] Sohier perceived a solution to this in his proposal for a form of immatriculation that guaranteed equal rights: "The door is open, now it is down to you to walk through it,"[44] he wrote in defence of his assimilation policy. By rejecting Sohier's reform proposal, however, the Colonial Ministry asked the Congolese elite, in the waiting room of colonial development, for a little more patience.

In light of the intense debates within the colonial public sphere, the question that arises is what legal and material benefits the *carte du mérte civique* and immatriculation actually bestowed. Through this two-tier status reform, the Colonial Ministry had signed up to the principle that the benefits accruing to holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and the immatriculated would come into effect incrementally. When the *carte du mérite civique* was initially introduced as a transitional solution in 1948, strictly speaking this did not amount to a legal status. Instead, in article xiv the relevant decree recognized cardholders' legal distinction *vis-à-vis* African society in principle, but failed to define it more precisely.[45] Instead, for this "category of natives"[46] benefits were to be realized within the framework of existing legislation and regulatory practice. Rather than guaranteeing cardholders' legal equality with Europeans, at best the decree was a promise made by colonial policy to gradually remove them from the *indigénat* and grant them certain privileges. This was no longer a matter of rights but of fewer prohibitions and less severe punishments. The assumption in the Colonial Ministry was that even more important than the benefits was the recognition cardholders would gain from Congolese and European society.[47]

On closer inspection, the benefits granted by the *carte du mérite civique* were modest in the first few years. In the period between September 1948 and the re-

43 Sohier, "Le problème des indigènes," 844.

44 A. Sohier, "La politique d'intégration," *Zaïre* 11, no. 5 (1951): 905 – 906.

45 *Ordonnance* N°21/258 AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948 créant une carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in *Voix du Congolais* no. 30 (September 1948): 363; *Normes pour obtenir la carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

46 Ibid.

47 This also emerges from correspondence between political decision-makers; letter from Van Hove to the colonial minister, 22 July 1949, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4. The views of the Colonial Ministry were thus in accord with those of Antoine Sohier, who headed the commission for the reform of immatriculation; letter from Sohier to the colonial minister, 27 June 1949, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

form of immatriculation in mid-1952, the colonial government issued several regulations. Henceforth, cardholders were spared punishment through flogging, were allowed to exploit mineral resources and in case of legal disputes could apply to a European judge. In addition, they would no longer be subject to the night-time curfew in the African quarters.[48] The privilege of being exempt from flogging, however, lasted for less than three years, as this controversial punishment was then universally prohibited.[49]

Soon after the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique* unrest began to spread among the *évolués*. As the official voice of the vernacular elite and tireless advocate for status reform, the *Voix du Congolais* felt obliged to give expression to the dissatisfaction felt at the card's thin pickings: "What good is the document to us?,"[50] asked editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba in July 1951. Measured against the great hopes fuelled by the newspaper over the years, the benefits of the *carte du mérite civique* fell short of expectations.

From mid-1952 on, criticisms of the long-discussed *évolué* status continued to mount. For the reform of immatriculation was also a disappointment: it too failed to introduce legal equality with Europeans and was limited to assimilation under civil law. Nonetheless, the associated decree declared grandiloquently that the "realm of our European civil rights"[51] had now been extended to the immatriculated.[52] What distinguished immatriculation from the *carte du mérite civique* was that the legal status it provided applied to the applicant's entire family. Furthermore, in case of wrongdoing one could not be stripped of immatriculation, which thus offered greater reliability than the *carte du mérite civique*.[53] At the end of the day, resistance from the settlers' milieu and the controversy over the scope of the status had dissuaded the Colonial Ministry from pursuing comprehensive legal assimilation. To avoid losing room for manoeuvre, when it came to immatriculation the Colonial Ministry opted for the piecemeal extension of privileges through decrees, as already practised in the case of the *carte du mérite civique*.

On the day immatriculation was introduced, for example, the authorities enacted equality with Europeans under penal law. From now on, trials of the immatriculated were no longer to be held before the police court, but before the

48 On the benefits enjoyed by cardholders, see *Carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/T/4.
49 Ibid.
50 A.-R. Bolamba, "A quoi nous sert ce document?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 64 (July 1951).
51 *Immatriculés et Porteurs de la Carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/T/4.
52 *Le décret du 17 mai modifiant les dispositions du code civil sur l'immatriculation des congolais*, reprinted in *Croix du Congo* (13 July 1952).
53 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 74.

courts of first instance; they could expect the same conditions of detention and rehabilitation as Europeans. The immatriculated, however, did not obtain these privileges exclusively, but shared them with the holders of the *carte du mérite civique*, for whom penal harmonization came into force simultaneously.[54] Commentaries on these initial privileges focussed not so much on the satisfaction felt at the prospect of an independent court process as on the financial disbenefits accruing to those involved, as they would no longer enjoy reduced legal costs.[55] Furthermore, many wondered what palpable benefits might be associated with equality under penal law, given that those granted it had to produce a spotless certificate of good conduct anyway.[56] In Brussels, scornful remarks from the Belgian Congo reached the ears of the colonial minister to the effect that *évolué* status was attractive only to future "offenders."[57]

Over the next few years, several new decrees were issued affecting the holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and the immatriculated. From March 1954 on, the latter were permitted to move about freely in the European residential zones.[58] When it came to the right of possession, the colonial government also granted the immatriculated full legal capacity. That this was important to those who dealt in property is shown by one applicant for immatriculation who saw this as the only means of attaining full contractual capability.[59] Most of these decrees, however, applied equally to the immatriculated and to holders of the *carte du mérite civique*.[60] The restrictive laws on alcohol consumption that created separate realms of consumption for Europeans and Congolese were rescinded for both these legal categories. They were now permitted to drink wine and hard liquor.[61] They could attend public film screenings without exception, which was relevant in the sense that all other Africans were only permitted to watch films authorized by a board of censors.

But this was all there was to the legislative measures implemented by the colonial government for the immatriculated and holders of the *carte du mérite*

54 *Immatriculés et Porteurs de la Carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/T/4.

55 Ibid.

56 Report by CEDIC, 23 May 1953, quoted in De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 145.

57 Letter from the governor general to the governor of Équateur province, 25 April 1953, AA/GG/11096.

58 *Immatriculés et Porteurs de la Carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/T/4.

59 "Jurisprudence, Immatriculation. Conditions," *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer* 41 (15 November 1953): 164.

60 A schematic but incomplete account of what the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation had in common and where they differed is provided by Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 74.

61 Though this applied only in the provinces of Léopoldville, Katanga and Kasai; *Immatriculés et Porteurs de la Carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/T/4.

civique. In the cold light of day, the benefits accruing to the elite entailed the selective dismantling of forms of legal discrimination that remained valid for the rest of the Congolese population.

The critique emanating from the *évolué* milieu that elite status did not entail economic assimilation was noted within the upper echelons of the colonial administration.[62] Disappointed hopes of financial improvement caused elite status to lose some of its appeal. The head of one selection committee for the *carte du mérite civique* thus reported to the provincial governor the "lack of enthusiasm prevailing among this section of the population." The roots of this disappointment, he explained, lay in the fact that this status entailed no material benefits and that the *évoluants* attached less value to the "moral and civic virtues" than to "external signs of prosperity."[63] A survey carried out by the awarding committee in Kivu painted a similar picture of prevailing attitudes: "It is not worth acquiring the card,"[64] was one of the views expressed. That the reform of immatriculation had also backed away from an *article unique*, which would have meant equal pay for the immatriculated and Europeans,[65] inevitably caused dissatisfaction among *évolués*. For the world of work continued to treat Europeans and Congolese differently: the former were employed within the framework of a *contrat d'emploi*, which still provided for greater income, even for the lowest salary bracket, than the best paid *contrat de travail*, which applied to the latter.[66] The colonial administration's annual report for 1955 noted that the lack of "material benefits" had prompted many Congolese to refrain from applying for immatriculation.[67] A large number of them thus made do with the *carte du mérite civique*.

62 Letter from the governor general to the governor of Équateur province, 25 April 1953, AA/GG/11096.

63 All quotations from letter from the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II to the governor of Léopoldville province, 13 February 1950, AA/GG/15726.

64 Minutes of the district committee in Kivu on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 3 February 1949, AA/GG/18708. The same document cites another criticism of equality under civil law, namely that divorces were less complicated under traditional law.

65 See Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 209.

66 It has been claimed that the head of the Immatriculation Commission, Antoine Sohier, himself backed away from the demand for equality between Europeans and Africans in this regard. He believed he was acting in the interests of the immatriculated. On the premise of equal pay, he concluded, they would have stood no chance against European candidates when applying for jobs; see ibid.

67 Chambre des représentants, *Rapport sur l'administration de la colonie du Congo Belge pendant l'année 1955 présenté aux chambres législatives* (Brussels: Ministere des affaires africaines, 1956), 100.

Despite offering similar privileges, it was easier to acquire and the application process was less expensive.[68]

Many representatives of the African elite were particularly unhappy about the financial cost of a successful application for *évolué* status and the time and effort they had to put into it, all of which they saw as out of all proportion to its true utility. "There are many duties to perform but it provides no great benefits,"[69] wrote one author with a view to the strict selection procedure.

Civility, selection committees and delayed inter-imperial transfers

In the colonial public sphere, however, the issue of the utility of the status reforms took up less space than that of the admission criteria. How were interested Congolese meant to attain this status? Who was to be granted the so-called "certificate of civilization"[70] and according to which criteria?

Let us turn first to the selection procedure for the *carte du mérite civique*, which later served as a template for the granting of immatriculation. According to the decree on the card of 12 July 1948, all African residents of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, a UN trusteeship under Belgian administration, could submit their oral or written application to the relevant territorial official.[71] The basic conditions included a monogamous lifestyle, a minimum age of twenty-one and a clean criminal record over the previous five years. The illiterate had to provide employment references, while women had to show proof of attendance at a *foyer social*. There were also subjective criteria, which played a crucial role in the selection procedure. The candidates had to "demonstrate good behaviour and habits indicative of a sincere desire to attain a higher level of civilization."[72]

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68 Letter from the governor general to the governor of Équateur province, 25 April 1953, AA/GG/11096.

69 Minutes of the district committee in Kivu on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 3 February 1949, AA/GG/18708.

70 This term was used in an internal document produced by the Colonial Ministry; *Normes pour obtenir la carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

71 African residents from neighbouring colonies could apply for a *carte du mérite civique* if they had lived in the Belgian Congo for at least five years. But the largest group, namely the Coastmen, who were born in Nigeria and the Gold Coast and worked for British firms, were barred from applying. Ibid.

72 Ibid.

Furthermore, the recommendations made by the *Congrès National Colonial* had already featured pleas for "strict selection."[73] In the *Voix du Congolais* in particular, where month after month authors exchanged views on which behaviours made a "genuine" *évolué*, calls were soon being made for strict screening. As we have seen, the mockery of the *évolués* in the European newspapers as polygamous, overbearing and overly attached to alcohol had gone hand in hand with Congolese authors' critique of allegedly unworthy representatives of their group: it was always somebody else who was assailed for being a snob.[74] In an editorial, for example, Antoine-Roger Bolamba wrote that the *carte du mérite civique* "is meant to separate the genuine from the false *évolués*."[75]

The selection procedure to determine status, however, was by no means special to the Belgian Congo. In fact, Belgian elite-making policy took inspiration from the naturalization procedures in the French colonies. As mentioned earlier, the project to introduce an *évolué* status initiated in the Belgian Congo in 1944 had drawn on the *statut des notables évolués*, enacted in 1941 in neighbouring Brazzaville by Governor General Félix Éboué for the French colony of AEF. The *statut des notables évolués* promised the new social category of the African elite an intermediate position between *citoyen* and *sujet français*, which, among other things, entailed individual release from the *indigénat*. Applicants had to satisfy the local colonial administration that they were of "impeccable respectability" and "exceed the average level of the natives."[76]

With this selection process, Governor General Éboué was taking his lead from the conditions the inhabitants of other parts of the French empire typically had to fulfil in order to attain French citizenship.[77] Since the 1930s, the French colonial administration in Indochina, for example, had carried out selection interviews on naturalization.[78] There, applicants were mostly so-called *métis*, the offspring of Asian and French parents who had grown up in Europe or in the European colonial milieu. They had to prove to French colonial officials that they had internalized "French civilization," with questions such as the following serving as the basis for evaluation: "Is he characterized by French courtesy? Does he

73 Piron, "Le problème," 15.

74 See for example A. Omari, "L'assimilation des Congolais," *Voix du Congolais* no. 55 (October 1950).

75 Bolamba, "Carte du mérite," 361.

76 Governor General Félix Éboué to governors and territorial administrators of AEF, 10 June 1943, CAOM/GG/AEF/5D206.

77 See Saada, "Entre 'assimilation' et 'décivilisation,'" 33.

78 Ibid., 33 – 34.

play French music?"[79] These tests were the hallmarks of a French colonial ideology according to which the colonized had to acquire the European way of life through imitation while setting aside their culture of origin.[80]

In AEF, applicants for the *statut des notables évolués* had to be of legal age, to be able to read and write, to have served in the army, to be in gainful employment and to have a clean criminal record. Furthermore, they had to "be honourable, of excellent moral character and competent to participate actively in matters of administration and civil society."[81] The colonial officials on the spot decided which applications to approve after examining the candidates in detail. The governor of Oubangi-Chari, a region of AEF, provided the colonial officials with hints on how to assess whether applicants were suited to a role in disseminating French civilization as shining examples:

> I request that you inspect their intimate sphere unnoticed through spot checks. A given applicant, for example, has mastered spelling and has fairly good syntax; he is always respectably dressed when he leaves the house, in shoes and a tie; he gets around on a bicycle, plays accordion and occasionally enjoys a bottle of beer. Take yourself along to his abode without warning; should you discover that there, although the head of the family has adequate financial means, people are eating the same cassava porridge as all the other labourers and eating with their fingers from old clay pots [...], you can conclude without hesitation that despite everything the applicant is not yet developed.[82]

The available sources do not reveal to what extent the French and Belgian colonial administrations exchanged information on their appointment policies. The proximity of the administrative headquarters in Léopoldville and Brazzaville may have facilitated informal meetings between colonial officials. What is certain is that from 1947 on, the Belgian General Government initiated several *conférences interafricaines en matière d'éducation indigène* in Léopoldville that brought together officials from British, French and Belgian colonies. Tellingly, the Belgian side was represented by the patron of the *Voix du Congolais*, Jean-Paul Quix; in the reform debate after 1945, he championed a blueprint for an *évolué* status that was astonishingly similar to that in the neighbouring colony of AEF.[83] The fact that from 1945 on, the *Voix du Congolais* and correspondence between the polit-

79 Dossiers de naturalisation produced in Indochina in the 1930s, quoted in ibid.
80 Ibid, 32 – 37.
81 Conditions Requises, *Notable Évolués*, n.d., CAOM/GG/AEF/5D206.
82 Letter from Governor Oubangi-Charis H. Sautot to the *chefs de département et subdivision du territoire*, 13 July 1943, CAOM/GG/AEF/5D206.
83 Report on the *conférence Anglo-Franco-Belge sur l'éducation dans les territoires d'outre-mer*, 10 – 14 June 1947, CAOM/GG/AEF/5D251.

ical masterminds of elite status in the Belgian Congo repeatedly made explicit reference to the elite-making policy being pursued by Governor General Éboué in AEF shows that key actors in the Belgian colony were taking a good deal of interest in the neighbours.

We should not forget, however, that progressive forces in French colonial policy already regarded Éboué's elite appointment policy as outdated at the time of its introduction. This is illustrated by the citizenship introduced in 1946 for all inhabitants of the *Union Française*, which rendered the benefits of the *statut des notables évolués*, only just enacted, redundant.[84] The *carte du mérite civique*, then, involved an inter-imperial transfer that was more apparent than real. Its introduction in 1948 was an anachronism when compared with the other side of the Congo river. While French colonial policy had just broken away from the idea that legal equality between Europeans and Africans must be tied to cultural equality,[85] this nexus survived in the practice of selecting the vernacular elite in the Belgian Congo.

In contrast to the AEF, it was not just a colonial official who was responsible for the selection procedure for the *carte du mérite civique*, but a multi-member committee, which met at the district administrative level and was officially appointed by the provincial governor. The decree of 12 July 1948 also specified the makeup of the committees, which consisted of four individuals, including a public prosecutor, a colonial official from the AIMO or the territorial administration and two bearers of the *carte du mérite civique*.[86]

While the presence of the European representatives on the committees comes as no surprise, the involvement of holders of the *carte du mérite civique*, which the committees were established to issue, seems odd. One of their first official acts was in fact to grant the card to their future Congolese members. As a rule, the district commissioner put forward a suitable candidate.[87] This appoint-

84 Interestingly, the colonial administration in AEF examined the question of how one might retain privileges for bearers of the *statut des notables évolués*. The administration apparently feared that levelling off status-holders' hard-won distinction might lead to discontent among the African elite; letter from the governor of Gabon to the General Governor of AEF, 6 December 1946, CAMO/GG/AEF/5D251.

85 See Cooper, *Citizenship*; F. Cooper, "Reconstructing Empire in British and French Africa," *Past & Present* 210, no. 6 (2011): 200 – 204.

86 *Ordonnance* N°21/258 AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948 créant une carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in *Voix du Congolais* no. 30, September 1948, 363; *Normes pour obtenir la carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

87 Letter from the governor of Léopoldville province to the district commissioners of 16 October 1948. AA/GG/15726.

ment practice did not go unopposed. Given that these committee members received the card without first being assessed for their suitability, in the *Voix du Congolais* Antoine-Marie Mobé, the former seminarian now employed in the administrative service, called the selection procedure itself into question: "We ask ourselves what the rationale for this process might be, for if this favour can be done for a small number of individuals, why can it not be made a general practice?"[88] This criticism, however, was dismissed by the editors with reference to the good judgment of the European committee members.[89]

The selection of the Congolese members also raised the question of whether they were neutral enough to make objective decisions about the applications; the possible bias of European members, by contrast, was not discussed. In Léopoldville, for example, a European committee member, a social worker in the local *foyer social*, proposed increasing the number of Congolese members to four, in order to do justice to the internal divisions among *évolués* in the capital. What she had in mind here was chiefly the tensions between the members of the two alumni associations ADAPES and ASSANEF.[90]

The need to appoint Congolese representatives delayed the start of the committees' real work. In the district of Lac Léopold II, for example, the local committee's final composition was only definitively settled one year after the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique*. Initially, the district commissioner had been dissatisfied with the territorial officials' suggestions. He categorized the candidates as "commonplace" and emphasized the importance of the criteria of "morality" and "loyalty."[91] When a selection had finally been made, one of the designated African members died, and the selection procedure started again from scratch.[92]

But in addition to appointing African committee members, there was still a need for clarification on substantive issues. The committees were exercised by the question of how to operationalize the selection criterion stipulated in the third paragraph of the sixth article of the decree. How could the "applicant's sin-

88 A.-M. Mobé, "A qui faut-il octroyer la carte du Mérite Civique," *Voix du Congolais* no. 46, January 1950, 16.

89 "Note de la redaction," *Voix du Congolais* no. 46 (January 1950): 21.

90 Letter from A. Louwers, employee of the *foyer social* of Léopoldville to the district commissioner, 10 November 1948, AA/GG/19669. The district commissioner supported this proposal in a letter to the governor of Léopoldville province of 17 November 1948; see ibid.

91 Letter from R. Tonnoir, district commissioner of Lac Léopold II, to the territorial administrator of Inongo, 9 March 1949, AA/GG/15726.

92 Letter from the territorial administrator of Inongo to the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II, 23 May 1949, AA/GG/15726.

cere desire" to "attain a higher level of civilization" be measured?[93] Because applicants' civility determined the allocation of the cards, the committees were responsible for developing binding criteria that could be assessed through a bureaucratic selection procedure.

The committee in the administrative district of Kivu, an area dominated by a plantation economy, whose settlers' spokesmen had protested against the policy of assimilation, developed a detailed questionnaire that guided its assessment of applications. Is the applicant active in an association, and if so, does he pay his membership fees? Does he write for the African press? What does he do in his free time? Does he go to the library? What kind of music does he listen to at home? Does he use most of his salary on his household? Does his wife attend the *foyer social?* Were his offspring delivered at a hospital? What do his children's teachers have to say about them? Is the house well-maintained? Do the furniture and household utensils match the applicant's financial means? Has he attracted attention for immoral conduct, such as drunkenness, debts, magic or adultery?[94] In brief, the committees sought to expose every nook and cranny of applicants' lives to searing scrutiny.

The selection committees were not only required to clarify the vague criteria for the *carte du mérite civique*, but also to demonstrate a rigorous approach to issuing them. In a letter sent to the colonial minister during his work on the reform of immatriculation, jurist Antoine Sohier thus called for a strict screening of the first holders of the *carte du mérite civique*. In view of the resentment felt by Europeans in the colony, he contended, it was crucial to ensure that initially the card be awarded only to a "small number of carefully selected natives [...] of not only factual but incontestable merit."[95] Representatives of the Colonial Ministry endorsed this view because they believed only a strict awarding practice could counteract the "shabby but unfortunately destructive criticisms made by the European population, which is generally hostile to the *évolués*."[96] As these officials saw it, the success of the project of promoting greater recognition for the *évolués* among the European residents of the colony through status reform depended on the quality of the cardholders: "To provide these Europeans with legitimate reasons to complain and play up isolated cases of rashly awarded benefits would do tremendous damage to our cause."[97]

93 *Normes pour obtenir la carte de mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

94 Minutes of the district committee of Kivu on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 3 February 1949, AA/GG/18708.

95 Letter from Antoine Sohier to the colonial minister, 27 June 1949, AA/AI/4743/III/T/4.

96 Letter from Van Hove to the colonial minister, 22 July 1949, AA/AI/II/T/4.

97 Ibid.

In order to prevent a permissive approach to allocation, Governor General Eugène Jungers had initially dispatched a limited number of *cartes du mérite civique* to the relevant offices and declared this sufficient.[98] Not long afterwards, however, he clarified that nonetheless all worthy candidates must be rewarded.[99] The governor general declined a request from the provincial governor in Elisabethville, who had requested a further 150 cards less than two years after their introduction.[100] The idea was to maintain a particularly rigorous approach to selection in those places in which European settlers were most critical of assimilation policy.

Yet even the authors writing for the *Voix du Congolais* advocated strict selection. The criticisms and contempt emanating from the European colonial milieu remained an important topic following the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique*. The reports in the newspaper, however, convey the impression that these authors' vehement calls for recognition of their developmental accomplishments in the European milieu had had the opposite effect. The disparagement of the *évolués* prompted even Etienne Ngandu, the leading author of the 1944 memorandum, to doubt whether the term was still an apt means of self-description: "In both word and deed, the white man has turned the word '*évolué*' into a synonym for good-for-nothing and riff-raff. [...] Who still wishes to bear this name?"[101]

In response to a polemical article in the *Revue congolaise illustrée*, the press organ of the Association of Belgian Colonial Veterans published in Brussels, the *Voix du Congolais* announced that it would no longer be referring to *évolués*, an "abominable word"[102] that lumped together a heterogenous group.

In the light of the first reports of ridicule directed at those granted a *carte du mérite civique*, Antoine-Roger Bolamba urged the selection committees to exercise caution. Many applicants, he stated, were unworthy, "caricatures of *évoluants*, lusting after material benefits."[103] He called for stricter scrutiny of applicants' character and the addition of new criteria: the "genuine black elite" should be distinguished by their commitment to the country's advancement,

98 Letter from the governor general to the provincial governors, 31 January 1949, AA/GG/15726. Here the governor general referred to his instructions communicated in earlier letters of 10 August 1948 and 7 October 1948.

99 Ibid.

100 Letter from the governor general to the governor of Katanga province, 17 July 1950, ARNACO/3CC/113/592.

101 Ngandu, "La carte d'Évolué," 198.

102 A.-R. Bolamba, "Il faudrait s'entendre," *Voix du Congolais* no. 32 (November 1948): 447.

103 A.-R. Bolamba, "Prudence oblige," *Voix du Congolais* no. 39 (June 1949): 219.

through active membership of an association, for example.[104] Correspondent Antoine-Marie Mobé assailed what he considered the unclear language of the decree when it came to the precise meaning of the term "good behaviour."[105] He even suggested subscription to the *Voix du Congolais* as an additional assessment criterion: reading the newspaper was evidence of an interest in self-improvement and in helping to advance colonial development. Another author opined that the committees alone should decide who was a member of the elite through the award of the *carte du mérite civique*.[106]

The Congolese authors' discourse of virtue and need for distinction, as well as politicians' fears of resistance from the European milieu, ensured that in the colonial public sphere the *carte du mérite civique* was soon no longer interpreted as a way of distinguishing a broad group of the so-called detribalized. Contrary to its true purpose, now the card was to be the mark of flawless representatives of the vernacular elite. In the associated debate, the fact that a reform of immatriculation was being pursued at the same time for the few assimilated went by the board. The *carte du mérite civique* gained currency as a strict mechanism for selecting members of the elite. Here the concept of the elite is best understood in light of the original meaning of the French verb *élire* – because ultimately the elite was chosen.[107] The card and the immatriculation enacted four years later were subject to a rigid colonial screening practice.

Applications and selection procedures

How did the application process for the *carte du mérite civique* proceed in concrete terms? What documents did applicants have to submit? What did the committees discuss in the detail? Which applications were successful and which were not? The minutes of committee meetings are a particularly good source of information on how local actors negotiated, discussed, staged and bureaucratically investigated the criteria for defining the official Congolese elite. They not only reveal what qualities the authorities demanded of this elite, but also highlight the invocation of the media ideal of the "perfected black" as a benchmark for evaluating applicants' lifeworld.

104 Ibid., 220.

105 Mobé, "A qui faut-il," 18.

106 N.n., "Nouvelle Importante," *Voix du Congolais* no. 29 (August 1948): 322.

107 The word *élite*, used in France for a social group since the seventeenth century, is derived etymologically from the verb *élire*. See M. Hartmann, *Elitesoziologie. Eine Einführung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004), 8.

The decree on the *carte du mérite civique* itself had remained silent about exactly what the application process involved. Initially, then, there was a lack of clarity at the various administrative levels about who had to do what and by when. This prompted the General Government to standardize the procedure two years later, in June 1950, through an amendment to the decree. This clarified that interested parties had to submit their applications to the territorial official responsible for their place of residence, who would sign them. Based on his own research, the territorial official then had to produce a report within three months and present it to the district commissioner. The latter passed the report on to the relevant committee, which finally made a decision or sought additional information. The territorial official had to inform the applicant of the committee's decision within one month and state the reasons in case of rejection. The candidate could file an objection to the decision within three months.[108]

While this procedure meant that the final decision lay with the committee, once again it was the already overburdened territorial officials who had to do the preparatory work. In particular, they had to obtain a number of documents and references relating to applicants. They requested statements from applicants' superiors on their work ethic, but also on their private life. Their former teachers were to attest to their intellectual abilities, while the relevant *chef de cité* and other holders of the *carte du mérite civique* were to provide information on their social and public conduct. In addition, school reports and a certificate of good conduct had to be procured, often by applicants themselves, who were thus responsible for all visits to the authorities along with all the associated costs.[109]

Often, the report submitted by the territorial officials failed to meet the committees' requirements. In August 1950, for example, one committee complained: "In general, the committee regrets the fact that the administrative officials all too easily vouch for the candidates' level of development and civic-mindedness. [...] In practice, these 'reports' are brimming with vague information couched in stereotypical language."[110]

Evidently, at times the district commissioners, that is, their superiors, who were often simultaneously chairs of the committees, instructed the responsible

108 *Ordonnance* N° 21/229/AIMO *du 24 Juin 1950, Completant l'Ordonannce* N° 21 – 258/AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948, créant une carte du mérite civique*, ARNACO/3CC/113/592.

109 This emerged from the analysis of several dozen application documents submitted to the committees in the districts of Lac Léopold II and Kivu between 1949 and 1957; AA/GG/15726 and AA/GG/18708.

110 Minutes of the district committee of Lac Léopold II on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 17 August 1950, AA/GG/15726.

territorial officials to review the documents: "I want a detailed report on the candidate by 1 July 1951 at the latest. In accordance with the most recent instructions from the governor general, this report must provide evidence that the candidates are not simple *évolués* but are members of the ELITE."[111] The committees thus demanded "guarantees of development, morality and civic-mindedness" from candidates.[112] The district commissioner instructed the territorial officials to inspect applicants' homes, sound out their attitudes to colonial institutions and the "less developed natives" and verify their loyalty to the administration.[113] In addition, the validity of all information was to be confirmed by a third party, culminating in a "detailed and well-founded report," which was then to be submitted to the committee.[114] Let's consider a concrete example of what the application process looked like in practice.[115]

On 8 September 1952, the territorial official of Oshwe received a typewritten letter. Its layout resembled that of the administrative correspondence typical of the Belgian Congo: sender in the top right-hand corner of the page, recipient at the bottom right, the usual polite phrases and a handwritten signature. The reference was to the "*Carte du Mérite Civique Application*," below which stood:

> The undersigned, Jacques K., son of Nzie, also known as Nkana (†) and Atemba (†), from the village of Mbombe, Djoko *chefferie*, Pendjwa sector, Kiri territory, district of Lac Léopold II, married, currently in Oshwe in the employ of the colony as an aid third-class to the territorial assistant, has the honour of respectfully requesting issuance of the *Carte du Mérite Civique* for Congolese of outstanding merit.[116]

Jacques K. pulled out all the stops of bureaucratic discourse, with which he was well familiar as an office worker. He even worked under the territorial official to

111 Letter from the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II to the territorial administrator of Oshwe, 9 September 1950, AA/GG/15726.

112 Minutes of the district committee of Lac Léopold II, 17 August 1950, AA/GG/15726.

113 District commissioner of Lac Léopold II to the territorial administrator of Mushie, 25 September 1953, AA/GG/15726.

114 Ibid.

115 I chose this example in part because it is only in the case of the committee in Lac Léopold II, an eastern district of Léopoldville province, that we have all the documents for 1951 and 1952. These include applications, correspondence and minutes. The authors of the only other publication based on the selection committees' documents used the same files; Omasomobo and Delaleeuwe, "Je veux la civilisation." It is thus an open question to what extent this material is representative.

116 Letter from Jacques K. to the territorial official of Oshwe, 8 September 1952, AA/GG/15726. Applicants for the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation identified by name have been anonymized in the present book.

whom he had written to initiate the application process. In line with the regulations, the latter confirmed his application and affirmed that the "preparation of documents" had begun.[117] Six weeks later, the territorial official wrote to the applicant requesting several documents, personal information and a detailed CV.[118]

Less than seven days later, Jacques K. complied with this request. He provided biographical information on his wife, mentioned his traditional Christian wedding and the birth of his first-born child, which, as fitting for an *évolué*, had taken place at a hospital. The 27-year-old outlined his impeccable educational career: trained as a primary school teacher by the head of the Catholic mission in Inongo, he had graduated from the *petit séminaire* of Bakoro. He also mentioned the various stages of his professional career: one year of teaching at a Catholic mission school, six months as a stock-keeper, four months as a court clerk and his current employment as aid to the territorial official. He also disclosed his monthly income for the current year and ownership of a small kitchen garden including 20 hens, a duck and two pigs. As requested, he enclosed school reports and certificates of employment in the dossier and provided the current addresses of his superiors and teachers to make it easier for the territorial official to write to them requesting references.[119]

It took six months for the territorial official to complete the dossier on Jacques K. with an excerpt from his criminal record showing that he had committed no offences,[120] certified copies of his church marriage certificate[121] and his primary school certificate from the *école normale* showing a "B" grade.[122] The responses from third parties were also enclosed in the dossier. The candidate was claimed to be a good family man, to receive the occasional visit from the local priest, but never to get his hands dirty in his own garden, though no sources were cited.[123] One of the details noted by the official on the candidate's "public life" was that he appreciated scent, but a critical remark also cropped up several times in shorthand form: "He does not mingle with the masses – he is withdrawn – he is very proud – he loathes his lower-class relatives."[124]

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117 Letter from territorial official to Jacques K., 1 October 1952, AA/GG/15726.

118 K. refers to this request from the territorial administrator, made in a letter of 8 November 1952, in a reply of 15 November 1952; AA/GG/15726.

119 Ibid.

120 Excerpt from K.'s criminal record, 23 May 1952, AA/GG/15726.

121 The church wedding took place on 30 August 1948. Letter from head of the mission in Ibeke to the territorial administrator, 27 May 1953, AA/GG/15726.

122 K.'s school leaver's certificate, 1 November 1947, AA/GG/15726.

123 Report on K. by the territorial administrator, 26 May 1953, AA/GG/15726.

124 Ibid.

It was now the task of the territorial official to evaluate the collated information. In his final report, he highlighted the candidate's high degree of education and good service in the administrative office, but gave to understand that while he behaved respectfully towards Europeans, he was arrogant in his dealings with his Congolese colleagues and treated ordinary workers with nothing short of contempt.[125] The report culminated in a rather diffuse conclusion: "His life, his conduct and his manners distinguish him from the mass of other Congolese, and I repeat that he is an upright young man, but he is not part of the group of *évolués* and certainly cannot be considered a member of the Congolese elite."[126] Before the day was out, the territorial official sent the complete dossier to the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II, who put the findings forward for discussion one month later as committee chair.[127]

Generally speaking, the awarding committees debated the candidates' suitability in their absence, with several usually being discussed at the same meeting. Each member had one vote, and a simple majority was sufficient to decide on the application.[128] The committee was only quorate if at least five of its members were present, but these always had to include a holder of the *carte du mérite civique* and a representative of the territorial administration.[129] The committee could endorse or reject the application. A third option was to defer the decision, either if it was thought necessary to obtain more information or if the applicant was rated as not yet mature but potentially apt. In this case he was asked to reapply at a later time.

The committee meeting on Jacques K.'s application took place in Inongo, the administrative seat of the district of Lac Léopold II.[130] Nine locally resident members were in attendance, who knew the candidate only from the documents. First, the committee chairman reported on the dossier submitted by the territorial official and read out the latter's assessment of the candidate. He then asked the members for their views. The first to state their opinion were the two Congolese representatives. The assessment of the teacher at the *école normale* of Inon-

125 Report on K. by the territorial administrator, 29 May 1953, AA/GG/15726.

126 Ibid.

127 Letter from the territorial administrator to the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II, 29 May 1953, AA/GG/15726.

128 *Ordonnance* N° 21/258 AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948 créant une carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in *Voix du Congolais* no. 30 (September 1948): 363.

129 *Ordonnance* N° 21/229/AIMO *du 24 Juin 1950, Completant l'Ordonannce* N° 21–258/AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948, créant une carte du mérite civique*, ARNACO/3CC/113/592.

130 The following section refers to the minutes of the district committee of Lac Léopold II on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 27 June 1953, AA/GG/15726.

go, whose appraisal of the dossier was essentially negative, because the candidate's arrogance towards his fellows suggested that he should not be issued with a *carte du mérite civique*, was backed by the warden of the CEC of Inongo. A European representative of the CEC administration took the same view. A Belgian doctor, on the other hand, highlighted the inconsistencies in the dossier and defended Jacques K.'s alleged aloofness on the basis that he was not from the region, which hampered his integration into the local community. As he saw it, the candidate's "excellent private conduct" spoke in his favour. The local public prosecutor backed him in this, contending that one could not refuse the *carte du mérite civique* on the basis that the candidate avoided the *basengi*, that is, uneducated Congolese.

Given that the committee had come to no clear view, the chairman pointed out that not everyone could receive such an important honour as the *carte du mérite civique*. The territorial administrator of Inongo also came out against the candidate: at the end of the day the goal was to choose "the elite of the elite." He also pointed out that a careless selection would attract sharp criticism. The territorial official explained further that the candidate ought to be rejected not just because of his attitude towards ordinary workers, but also due to an incident, omitted from the dossier, in which he had been guilty of "public intoxication." As a result of the differing opinions among the committee members, no final decision was made about this applicant.

Ten months after Jacques K. had submitted his application to the local territorial administrator, he had to pay a visit to the latter in person to hear the committee's decision. In front of him lay the letter explaining that due to his social conduct he could not yet be counted among the elite:

> The committee takes the view that Mr K.'s private conduct and professional activity are impeccable. His social behaviour, meanwhile, chiefly towards those at or below his level, must be improved. He is highly commendable but not yet a member of the elite. The candidate's application may be reassessed after two years.[131]

The letter, signed by Jacques K., was sent back to the district commissioner. There are no sources available to clarify whether he made a second attempt two years later, whether the demands for further perfecting discouraged him or spurred him on, or whether he altered his social behaviour – or whether the objections raised during the committee meeting were well-founded in the first place.

131 Minutes on K.'s application delivered by post, 22 July 1953, AA/GG/15726.

A social distance from uneducated Congolese was also cited in other committee minutes as grounds for rejection. One applicant, whose reading of the *Voix du Congolais* and *Croix du Congo*, regular visits to the local library and nicely furnished home were attested by the territorial official, failed to pass muster with the committee twice within just three years due to his incorrigibly "snooty behaviour."[132] But the committees also identified other reasons why applicants were unworthy of the card.

Antoine P. submitted his application as the first candidate from the territory of Mushie.[133] The territorial official's investigative report stated that, as a doctor's assistant, the candidate had dealings with "natives" on a daily basis and treated them "humanely."[134] He had also been elected president of the local *évolué* association.[135] His education, on the other hand, was unremarkable when compared with others practising the same profession. Outweighing everything else, however, was the picture the official painted of his visit to the applicant's home. The following description shows that the official must have put every corner of the house under the microscope:

> Living room and dining room clean and tidy. Bedrooms quite untidy and obstructed by various objects. Kitchen separate from the dwelling; grime in evidence; leftover food everywhere; there is a strong smell here. [...] Furnishings: very respectable in the living room and dining room. Fairly primitive in the bedrooms. Kitchenware: does not give the impression of being cleaned regularly.[136]

So while the official was satisfied with the lounge, so omnipresent in the media imagery of the perfect *évolué* family, and the dining room, he was disturbed by the state of the kitchen and bedrooms, which he evidently felt able to enter without violating the applicant's privacy.

The criticism of Antoine P.'s household was ultimately a criticism of his wife. The entry on her "degree of development" stated: "Not applicable. Not attending a course on household refinement."[137] As we saw earlier, there was a tradition of inspection visits of this kind in the Belgian Congo, most of them carried out by

132 Minutes of the district committee of Lac Léopold II on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 7 March 1953, AA/GG/15726.

133 Letter from P. to the territorial administrator of Mushie, 10 August 1953, AA/GG/15726.

134 Detailed report on P. by the territorial administrator of Mushie, 13 November 1953, AA/GG/15726.

135 Namely the Cercle Colonel Chaltin; see *Activité des cercles*, *Voix du Congolais* no. 96 (March 1954): 231.

136 Report on P. by the territorial administrator of Mushie, 13 November 1953, AA/GG/15726.

137 Ibid.

the (female) heads of the *foyers sociaux* to appraise their students' learning progress. In a context in which the state of one's home helped determine whether one was issued with a *carte du mérite civique*, it is not hard to understand why members of the vernacular elite were so keen for their wives to attend the household management schools.[138] Women played a key role in staging an impeccable *évolué* existence. As the authorities sought to assess whether individuals had internalized ideas about what constituted a civilized lifestyle, the private sphere became subject to public discussion and scrutiny.

In addition, home visits, which were carried out by the territorial official but in some places also by staff of the *foyers sociaux* or the *chef de cité*, were meant to clarify whether the candidate was using enough of his salary on his household. The reports read like inventories of material possessions:

> In the living room there are 1 table, 7 chairs, 1 table with a gramophone, 1 kitchen cupboard containing several household appliances. A cover on the table. In the living room a side table and 4 armchairs and 4 small side tables, 1 table with a radio, 1 large rectangular mirror. [...] Everything is clean. Cushions on the armchairs, curtains on windows and doors, table covers and wall decoration.[139]

Nonetheless, the inhabitant of this dwelling, described in such detail and highly praised, was denied the *carte du mérite civique*. For even the loveliest of furnishings could not make up for the flaw identified in the territorial official's report. For a lengthy period, in addition to his longstanding marriage, the candidate maintained a relationship, of which few were unaware, with another woman; he had even had a child with her.[140] Although the candidate apologized to the territorial official for having kept quiet about this child,[141] the committee's judgment on the otherwise flawless application was unequivocal: "His character is that of the man-about-town, who has a lover everywhere he goes and drinks a great deal,"[142] to quote one committee member's final conclusion.

Well aware that the practice of polygamy was an obstacle to obtaining the *carte du mérite civique*, many candidates kept quiet about such relationships in their application. Attempts at concealment often did the rounds at committee meetings, prompting the authorities to urge the territorial officials not to rely on

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138 Interview with Jean de la Croix Mobé, Kinshasa, 1 September 2010; interview with Jean Lema, Kinshasa, 13 August 2010.

139 Report on Benoît C. by the territorial administrator of Kiri, 7 July 1953, AA/GG/15726.

140 Ibid.

141 Letter from C. to the territorial administrator of Kiri, 2 July 1953.

142 Minutes of the district committee of Lac Léopold II on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 7 August 1953, AA/GG/15726.

applicants' statements. Instead, through a "thorough investigation of [candidates'] private lives" they were supposed to check whether they did not in fact have a "lover."[143]

Rumours of applicants with several marriage-like relationships were thus far from rare. One former mission school teacher on another selection committee, for example, who had known a candidate since childhood, confirmed that while he was one of his "best pupils," recently his wife had confided in the pastor that her husband's identity card recorded an "illegitimate child."[144] It is no coincidence that the comprehensive screening of applicants' lives even included confidential information revealed to clergymen. The missionaries were still the supreme custodians of the *évolués*' monogamous nuclear families. This time, however, the candidate's written statement, composed in the style of a confession, persuaded the committee not to permanently deny him a card. Deploying the language of perfectibility, the letter evoked the desire, required of all applicants, to attain a higher level of civilization against all the odds:

> I regard my behaviour as extremely flawed, as I was married according to Christian tradition, and I promise to take serious steps to improve myself, for the sake of my own uprightness and to ensure the peace of mind of my wife and children. Please believe me when I say that I have betrayed my wife just once in fifteen years of marriage. I leave it to your judgment whether you grant me a distinction I am no longer sure I am even entitled to.[145]

On some occasions, in fact, the committee learned of the candidate's alleged polygamy only after it had issued a *carte du mérite civique*. This applied to one of the first men to be granted this distinction by the committee in the district of Lac Léopold II, and the first in the Belgian Congo whose card was withdrawn.[146] The individual in question was Patrice S., a doctor's assistant. Before the territorial official had even set a date for the public conferment of the *carte du mérite civique*, in September 1950 the district commissioner instructed him to withdraw it

143 Letter from the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II to the territorial administrators, 9 January 1950, AA/GG/15726.

144 Letter from the mission school teacher in Inongo to the territorial administrator of Lac Léopold II, 2 July 1953, AA/GG/15726.

145 Letter from Jean T. to the territorial administrator, 5 July 1953, AA/GG/15726.

146 This emerges from official statistics on the *carte du mérite civique*, which list all successful and unsuccessful applications, as well as withdrawn cards, by territory. Chambre des représentants, *Rapport sur l'administration de la colonie du Congo Belge pendant l'année 1950 présenté aux chambres législatives* (Brussels: Ministere des affaires africaines, 1951), 111; Rapport annuel AIMO District Lac Léopold II 1951, ARNACO/AIMO/73CC/73/157.

from Patrice S. for one year.[147] Shortly before, doubts had been raised about the candidate at a committee meeting. For after his distinction had been announced, the territorial official received an anonymous letter alleging that Patrice S. had two lovers; the head of the local mission, at least, was able to confirm this. In addition, two weeks after the committee's positive decision on 20 December 1949, S. was fined: he was accused of having violated the nightly curfew for Congolese on 31 December and to have been found in a state of mild drunkenness.[148]

It is quite possible that Patrice S. was celebrating the award of the *carte du mérite civique* on New Year's Eve. His misfortune, however, was that for holders of the card the nightly curfew was only abolished eighteen months later.[149] The committee chair's wish to deprive him of the card permanently, however, was voted down by a majority of the members.[150] When the case came before the committee again one year later, the additional investigations, which the territorial official had been expressly instructed to carry out,[151] favoured Patrice S. and refuted the accusations made against him. In July 1952, he was reissued with his *carte du mérite civique*.

In total, the committees demanded the return of the *carte du mérite civique* only from one in fifty of the 1,557 status holders.[152] This may be numerically insignificant, but it is indicative of the logic of the official process of appointment to the elite. It allows us to infer that in general the *carte du mérite civique* represented a highly fluid status. It could be revoked and was in a sense awarded on probation. Just as, in colonial discourse, the *évolués*' development towards a civilized lifestyle was regarded as unstable, this legal category was also unstable in design. It amounted to provisional assimilation. The expectation that *évolués* were likely to regress meant that holders of the *carte du mérite civique* had to incessantly prove that they were worthy of this legal category.

147 Letter from the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II to the territorial administrator of Mushie, 9 September 1950, AA/GG/15726.

148 Minutes of the district committee of Lac Léopold II on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 17 August 1950, AA/GG/15726.

149 List of the benefits and rights provided by the *carte du mérite civique* (as at December 1952), GG/AI/4743/II/T/4.

150 Minutes of the district committee of Lac Léopold II on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 17 August 1950, AA/GG/15726.

151 Letter from the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II to the territorial administrator of Mushie, 9 September 1950, AA/GG/15726.

152 My own calculations, based on the colonial administration's official figures, suggest that by the end of 1958 a total of 42 out of 1,557 holders of the *carte du mérite civique* had had theirs withdrawn. See annual statistics for the period 1949 – 1959: Chambre des représentants.

To sum up, the selection committees mistrusted the applicants, listened to rumours and malicious gossip and encumbered the candidates with a hard slog that was both protracted and expensive. Above all, they required applicants to permit inspection of intimate spheres of life. The committees subjected applicants to a "maturity test," a litmus test of cultural bourgeoisification. What Antoine-Roger Bolamba in the *Voix du Congolais* demanded of future holders of the *carte du mérite civique*, namely that the "black elite must be capable of everything,"[153] the committee members made the benchmark for their decisions.

Domesticity, a monogamous marriage, a civilized gender order, exemplary conduct, sensible leisure-time activities, rational consumption: these leitmotifs of the media discourse of self-reassurance among Congolese authors were also key themes in the committees. They were translated into a catalogue of criteria, produced by the committees with bureaucratic meticulousness, which applicants had to satisfy in order to obtain the *carte du mérite civique*. The selection process was, so to speak, collateral damage caused by authors' normative discourse on perfectibility, which had helped them lend weight to their demands. The perfidious thing about this was that the demands an aspiring elite made of itself contributed to this strict selection. In order to be officially appointed a member of the Congolese elite, moreover, it was not enough to be a conscientious worker or faithful husband, to aid the *indigènes* in their cultural development or to maintain a household beyond reproach. Applicants had to comply with all these requirements and more besides. The desire to be attributed to a higher level of civilization by obtaining the *carte du mérite civique* might come to nothing due to a lack of clean cutlery.

The colonial maturity test

Though so far it has seemed as though applicants bowed to a prescribed procedure, the application and selection processes were not a performance in which candidates played merely a minor role. Certainly, the sources prohibit systematic investigation of how applicants sought to positively influence this process, but they are sufficient to establish that this did occur.

As the examples discussed earlier showed, some applicants kept quiet about their lovers or illegitimate children by opting not to register them in their official

153 A.-R. Bolamba, "L'Elite Noire," *Voix du Congolais* no. 44 (November 1949): 416.

documents.[154] Whether they succeeded in strategically feigning monogamy, and if so on what scale, must remain unclear. It is inherent in attempts at concealment that only the unsuccessful cases are documented.

There was an unhappy outcome for one candidate who attempted to convince the committee of his above-average education with a falsified school report, which came to light after he had been awarded the *carte du mérite civique*. The subsequent forced return of the card seems an even more bitter blow given that proving one had completed school was not an explicit criterion, though in practice it improved one's chances of success.[155]

Less risky than falsifying documents were attempts by applicants to fix up their homes for inspection. Particularly when the date of a home visit had been set, furniture was borrowed from friends, while the house was tidied and cleaned.[156] These stagings of exemplary bourgeois domesticity, however, required all members of the family to play along, which was markedly more difficult if differing everyday habits existed within a family.

The novel *Les hauts et les bas* by Batukezenga Zamenga, published in 1971, tells of the family conflicts experienced by the main character in the course of his application for immatriculation.[157] Written from the anti-colonial perspective of Zaïrization in the 1970s, when President Joseph-Désiré Mobutu replaced all names of colonial origin with supposedly authentic African ones,[158] the novel interprets the embrace of a European lifestyle as a process of increasing alienation from one's own traditions. Guided by this cultural dichotomy, the author conceptualizes the husband and wife as a contrastive pair: on the one hand we have the male protagonist, who moves to Léopoldville after finishing school and poses as an *évolué*, and on the other his wife, a woman from the village who has brought her habits along with her.

The author describes the protagonist's application for immatriculation as a series of "difficult initiation rites."[159] At the recommendation of his European su-

154 Having a religious wedding became a strategy through which future applicants for a *carte du mérite civique* could improve their chances: it eventually got about that the committees often requested a statement from the local missionaries, whose opinion carried weight when it came to making a decision; A.-A. Ngeke, "La carte du mérite civique scindera-t-elle la classe des évolués?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 140 (November 1957).

155 Correspondence from the deputy king's procurator in Buta to the king's procurator in Stanleyville, 26 September 1951, AA/GG/21875.

156 Tshonda and Delaleeuwe, "Je veux la civilisation," 840 – 841.

157 B. Zamenga, *Les hauts et les bas* (Kinshasa: Médiaspaul, 1971), 54 – 60. On the author's work, see Riva, *Nouvelle histoire*, 131 – 133.

158 On Zaïrization, see Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 417 – 427.

159 Zamenga, *Les hauts*, 54.

perior, he changes his lifestyle in order to satisfy the committee members. Henceforth, he stays away from bars and dresses according to "*évolué* fashion" – "his tie becomes a permanent fixture, regardless of circumstance or climate";[160] he also joins the church choir and speaks only French.

Yet his self-staging as a "genuine" *évolué* fails due to his wife's traditional way of life. She not only refuses to adopt the European habit of sitting next to one's husband on the pew, but also to modify her approach to everyday family life. She resists the demand to eat European meals together at the table as a family. While her husband eats in the house, his wife and children continue to sit on the ground outside, eating from a bowl. The couple finally reaches a compromise: they eat at the dining table in the living room only on Sundays, when the committee representatives usually visit people's homes. The author of the novel, however, has this performance exposed as the home visit takes place on a Thursday, when the family is eating in the traditional way: the children cry when their father, unnoticed by the territorial administrator, manoeuvres their *fufu* into the dustbin. When another unannounced home visit takes place late in the evening, the protagonist is hosting a number of relatives from the village, who are spending the night on mats in the living room. For the selection committee, this incident is evidence enough that the candidate is captive of traditional notions of family. They thus refuse to grant him immatriculation.

The novel lays bare the familial conflicts that occur during the application process for *évolué* status, which could be triggered by the authorities' attempts to investigate whether a candidate fit the ideal of the "perfect black." Furniture could be arranged more easily than family members.

A change of status, then, was possible chiefly for those Congolese men who, as master of the house, could ensure a gendered and domestic order informed by bourgeois precepts. Many applicants feared the associated scrutiny of the private sphere. Today, contemporary witnesses still view this as symbolic of the profound humiliation suffered by the vernacular elite.

Other applicants, meanwhile, went out of their way to invite committee members to inspect their homes in order to showcase their civility. Antoine-Marie Mobé, for example, mentioned several times already as an active association president and press correspondent, informed the committee chair that anyone could see for themselves, at any time, that he was performing his everyday duties as family man and husband:

> Please note that as yet I am probably the only father who – in possession of a small blackboard, recognizable from the street when the windows are open – attends to the education

160 Ibid., 55.

> and edification of his children during the evening. Furthermore, I am probably the only husband who has taught his wife to read and write.[161]

Mobé's case, however, is less an example of applicants' subservience than of how they proactively laid claim to elite status. Mobé had already submitted his application for a *carte du mérite civique* during his time in Stanleyville.[162] The application procedure, however, was temporarily suspended, probably in connection with his conflicts, as association president, with the local colonial administration, which was responsible for the assessment of his dossier.[163] In any event, Mobé resubmitted his application in Coquilhatville only after he had moved there in 1953. Having once again received no response of any kind from the local committee, Mobé broke with the conventions of official protocol, which demanded reserve and patience of applicants, as communication with the committee could occur only indirectly through the territorial official. Mobé repeatedly wrote to the committee chair in person, providing unsolicited arguments for a positive decision.[164] He disposed of possible doubts by enclosing in one letter the court decision absolving him of the embezzlement of which he had previously been accused.[165] He forwarded current work evaluations and emphasized that he was no simple office assistant: he now sat "at the same table with the Europeans" and took on the tasks of his European superiors, who he even stood in for when they were absent.[166]

For Mobé, the *carte du mérite civique* was not something that he wished to *ask* the committee for. He laid claim to it. "What else?,"[167] he asked after listing his own merits. When, after three years of waiting, he had received no response, in late 1956 he wrote sarcastically:

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161 Letter from Antoine-Marie Mobé to the chair of the committee in Coquilhatville on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 17 December 1956, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.
162 Ibid.
163 Mobé spoke of "specific circumstances that have made it necessary to postpone my application for a certain amount of time"; ibid.
164 Letters from Mobé to the chair of the committee in Coquilhatville on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 19 October 1956, 17 December 1956 and 31 December 1956, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.
165 Letter from Mobé to the chair of the committee in Coquilhatville on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 19 October 1956, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.
166 Letter from Mobé to the chair of the committee in Coquilhatville on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 17 December 1956, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.
167 Ibid.

> I have the honour of reminding you once again to kindly let me know whether the relevant committee, otherwise to be found everywhere, exists in Coquilhatville as well. In view of the time that has elapsed since my first appeal, I am forced to conclude that there is in fact no such committee here in Coq.[168]

Finally, Mobé's persistence and systematic self-portrayal as a "genuine" *évolué* paid off: on 13 June 1957, he received his *carte du mérite civique*.[169]

So far, I have focussed on the applications and selection procedure involved in the *carte du mérite civique*. But how did things stand in the case of immatriculation? Because this status conferred greater legal benefits, namely equality with Europeans under civil law, the General Government demanded that candidates satisfy even more stringent conditions and undergo a particularly strict selection process. A decree of 17 May 1952 specified the following conditions: "Proof of an education and way of life of a civilizational level that allows one to enjoy one's rights and fulfil one's obligations as provided for in the written legislation."[170] In much the same way as with the *carte du mérite civique*, when granting immatriculation the authorities were keen for applicants to demonstrate a lifestyle consonant with prevailing notions of civility.

In contrast to the *carte du mérite civique*, the application process for immatriculation did not lie in the hands of a selection committee. Because this was a matter of conferring civil rights, it was the courts that made the decision. It was thus the king's procurator responsible for a particular province who dealt with the applications. He revealed candidates' identity through a "public notice" that took the form of announcements in the press and notices outside administrative offices.[171] This text requested submission of information on, and objections to, applicants within two months.[172] Once again, it was the territorial official's task to produce a detailed report and compile similar information as in the case of applications for the *carte du mérite civique*.[173] At a court sitting, the judge,

168 Letter from Mobé to the chair of the committee in Coquilhatville on the issuing of the *carte du mérite civique*, 31 December 1956, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

169 Letter from the territorial administrator of Coquilhatville to Mobé, 7 June 1957, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

170 Decree on immatriculation of 17 May 1952, reprinted in *Croix du Congo* (13 July 1952).

171 P. Lumumba, *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il ménacé?* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1961), 64.

172 The *avis au public* were regularly published in the *Voix du Congolais*. See for example A. Decoux, "Avis du Public," *Voix du Congolais* no. 79 (October 1952): 597.

173 This meant compiling information on the professional, moral and familial aspects of applicants. See, for example, the letter from the king's procurator in Stanleyville to the territorial administrator in Stanleyville, 6 July 1954, AA/GG/11096.

together with four specially appointed assessors, decided whether to award immatriculation in each case.[174]

Further, unlike the *carte du mérite civique*, immatriculation applied not just to the applicant individually but also to his wife and children. It was not, therefore, an individual who applied for immatriculation, but a family. In French Africa too, until the late 1940s the most important criterion for switching from the *indigénat* to citizenship had been the family: as the nucleus of society, it was allocated the task of handing down "those qualities of 'civility' considered specific to French civilization and essential to incorporation into French society."[175]

In the case of candidates for immatriculation, then, the court's critical gaze was directed primarily at their wives. The guiding ideal here was not the "radically modern phenomenon of the emancipated woman who enjoys equality with men," but rather a traditional Catholic conception: "We must be satisfied if she makes a good wife, good mother and good housewife in equal measure," stated Antoine Sohier as the main figure responsible for planning reformed immatriculation.[176] The public prosecutors of the Belgian Congo were informed in the *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer*, edited by Sohier, of how immatriculation was to be implemented and how to assess wives' capacity for education. They were also to evaluate whether the children had good enough French and sufficiently "civilized practices" to keep up at a European school.[177] The application process for immatriculation included personal attendance at court, where husband and wife both had to justify themselves before a jury:

> The applicant and his wife undergo a brief interrogation, which entails complex queries and a number of loaded questions, including: What do you understand by the term immatriculation? What legal benefits does immatriculation entail? In case of a domestic dispute, do you leave your husband to seek refuge with your aunts? What do you do with the money your husband earns?[178]

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174 The decree stipulated that there had to be enough assessors for every district, always including two territorial officials and a Congolese already granted immatriculation. See decree on immatriculation of 17 May 1952, reprinted in *Croix du Congo* (13 July 1952); letter from the governor of Équateur province to the head of the General Government's AIMO department, 16 August 1952, AA/GG/10211.

175 See Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit?*, 309.

176 A. Sohier, "Immatriculation des indigènes," *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer* 39, 13 September 1953, 96.

177 A. Sohier, "Immatriculation des indigènes," *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer* 41, 15 November 1954, 108.

178 Lumumba, *Congo, terre d'avenir*, 65.

This is how Patrice Lumumba described attendance at court, which scrutinized not just applicants' bourgeois lifestyle and their families' "civilized" gender order, but also their understanding of European law.[179]

Lumumba spoke from experience. He was one of the first to be granted immatriculation, submitting his application in August 1952, less than three months after the introduction of the reform.[180] But it was to be two years before he was awarded this status. Lumumba is not only an example of the flawless image candidates had to convey to attain immatriculation, but also of the references and networks that could help them do so.

After submitting his application, Lumumba first made a great effort to bolster his CV. At the post office in Stanleyville, he rose from the lowest to the highest rank of Congolese office assistant within sixteen months.[181] He also advanced within the associational world of Stanleyville. Between December 1953 and March 1954, he took over the presidencies of the AES, the local branch of the ADAPES and the *Amicale de Postiers Indigènes de la Province* Orientale; in April 1953, he became secretary of the *Association du Personnel Auxiliaire de la Colonie*.[182] During the two years of the application process, Lumumba published thirty-one articles in the *Croix du Congo* and three more in the *Voix du Congolais*.[183] He also volunteered at the *Bibliothèque Publique pour Congolais*.

As if this was not enough, in a eulogy to Henry Morton Stanley on the fiftieth anniversary of his death Lumumba played up to Belgium's perception of its colonialism as a philanthropic endeavour, while keeping quiet about the bloody chapters in the explorer's biography: "Stanley brought us peace, gave us human dignity, improved our material lives, nurtured our intellect and developed our soul."[184] The *Voix du Congolais* printed this speech, given at the AES, verbatim, thus painting a picture of an eloquent and loyal *évolué*.[185] Lumumba also gained the support of French sociologist Pierre Clemens for his application for immatriculation.[186] Off the back of Lumumba's role as research assistant, a

179 Ibid.

180 Letter from J. Orbaen, king's procurator in Stanleyville, to Patrice Lumumba, 4 September 1952, property of the Treves family.

181 Lumumba was promoted to office worker second-class on 11 October 1952 and entered into the first class on 1 July 1954; Mutamba-Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba*, 72.

182 Ibid. The *Voix du Congolais* published an encomium to Lumumba, along with his portrait; A. Songolo, "M. Patrice Lumumba à l'honneur," *Voix du Congolais* no. 106 (January 1955).

183 Figures derived from the list of publications drawn up by Jean-Marie Mutamba-Makombo; Mutamba-Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba*, 57–65.

184 P. Lumumba, "Un explorateur incomparable," *Voix du Congolais* no. 100 (July 1954).

185 Ibid.

186 Letter from Réné Rom to Lumumba, 28 August 1954, property of the Treves family.

friendship took off that even found expression in the naming of his son, born in September 1952, who was christened Patrice Pierre Clemens Lumumba. His circle of European supporters also included Réné Rom, a locally resident liberal lawyer and adviser to the AES. In particular, Rom lent Lumumba support when, after his first application for immatriculation was rejected, he turned to the Court of Appeal in Léopoldville.[187] When Lumumba was granted immatriculation at the second attempt,[188] he had not only invested his hard-won cultural and social capital, but also his money: the court costs in Léopoldville came to 1,180 francs, equating to about half the monthly earnings of an office worker in the colonial administration.[189]

Lumumba's case lays bare the sweeping requirements applicants for immatriculation had to satisfy, regardless of where they lived in the Belgian Congo. One of the first individuals to be immatriculated in Léopoldville had served with the *Force Publique* in Madagascar and Burma during the Second World War, after which he became president of the *Association des Anciens Combattants* and a member of the advisory committee of the *Voix du Congolais*.[190] In Bukavu, the couple T. also satisfied the jury in every respect. Jules T. had completed the *petit séminaire* before continuing his education at evening schools. He was a "first-class office worker" and highly regarded by his employers. Active in seven associations as member or president, he also sat on advisory bodies within the colonial administration, such as the *Conseil de Province du Kivu* and the *Conseil de Gouvernement*.[191] He had a considerable sum in his savings account and had paid off the loan he had taken out to buy his house. In addition, not only had he already received the *carte du mérite civique*, but so had his wife, making "Mrs Jules T." one of the few women to be granted the card.[192] Court records on another applicant from Léopoldville mention a stay in Belgium and training as a priest

187 Letter from Rom to Lumumba of 28 August 1954 and 13 September 1954, property of the Treves family. Section III, article V of the decree on immatriculation permitted applicants to appeal: decree on immatriculation of 17 May 1952, reprinted in *Croix du Congo*, 13 July 1952.

188 This occurred on 5 August 1954. For the announcement of the decision, see *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer* 55 (15 January 1955): 22.

189 Letter from Réné Rom to Lumumba, 13 September 1954, property of the Treves family. On earnings, see Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 92.

190 "Immatriculation des indigènes, conditions, 1er instance Léopoldville, 27 July 1953," *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer* 43 (15 January 1954): 162.

191 On this section, see M. Dermaut, "Chronique judiciaire: L'Immatriculation," *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer* 43 (15 January 1954): 28 – 29.

192 See Comité de l'A.P.I.C., "Au tableau d'honneur de l'elite noire remise des Cartes de mérite civique," *Voix du Congolais* no. 48 (March 1950): 163 – 164; E. B. Chirishungu, "Au tableau d'honneur de l'elite," *Voix du Congolais* no. 74 (May 1952): 302 – 303.

at the *grand séminaire*, while another candidate is documented as having attended the *Colonie Scolaire* in Boma and helped edit the *Voix du Congolais* and *Mbandaka*. The emphasis in another case, meanwhile, was on the candidate's investment of his savings in the building of a "house of durable materials, pleasantly furnished and properly maintained."[193]

In brief, the immatriculated bore impressive testimony to the cultural bourgeoisification of their entire family. They satisfied the jury that they were propagating the ideal of the Congolese elite, and not just in the media: in their everyday lives too, they were convincing embodiments of the "perfected black."

Social profiles and success rates

Beyond case studies, what can we say about the number and profile of applicants and those selected? What was the ratio of successful to failed applications? Did those allocated to the different legal categories have specific characteristics? Were there differences between the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation?

First, we should recall that ever since it flared up at the end of the Second World War, the debate on *évolué* status had revolved around who ought to benefit from it. Both European and Congolese actors long disagreed on whether the target group should be narrowly or broadly defined. With the declared goal of preventing the formation of an isolated elite caste, in July 1948 the colonial minister opted for an inclusive solution in the shape of the *carte du mérite civique*. This he linked with the recognition of an "open class," those "natives" whose education and culture took their lead from European models but without necessarily belonging to the elite.[194] The *Voix du Congolais* reinforced this reading, stating that the *carte du mérite civique* was not intended solely for the "category of office assistants," but that even the illiterate could apply: "It should be granted to all those who have made serious efforts to develop."[195]

Despite all the avowals, ultimately it was the educated and professionally successful candidates who made up the majority of successful applicants. A statistical analysis of different social groups shows that by late 1951 three out of four *cartes du mérite civique* went to the so-called "native brain workers": 290 out of

193 "Chronique judiciaire, L'Immatriculation," *Journal des tribunaux d'outre-mer* 54 (15 November 1954): 108 – 109.

194 Speech by the colonial minister on the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 28 (July 1948): 303 – 306.

195 Bolamba, "Carte du mérite," 360.

398 cards in absolute figures.[196] The reports on cardholders published in periodicals such as the *Voix du Congolais* shed light on the professions covered by this term and indicate that this group consisted chiefly of office workers, doctor's assistants and mission school teachers, in other words the typical *évolué* occupational groups, which required a high level of education. In the first seven years after the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique*, a total of 228 individuals were mentioned in the *Voix du Congolais*, of whom half were office workers.[197] This is unsurprising given that, as a rule, office workers were recruited from the best schools in the country. They were the likeliest to have the kind of cultural and social capital that promised success when applying for a *carte du mérite civique*. Further, it was mainly office workers employed by the colonial administration who were encouraged to submit an application by their European employers.[198]

What other groups were granted the *carte du mérite civique?* By 1952, "skilled and low-skilled workers," at 51 individuals, made up a not insignificant 13 percent. One in three of this group was from the most heavily industrialized region of Katanga, where there was a greater need for trained manual workers.[199] These included carpenters, mechanics, but also stock-keepers.[200] At 23 individuals, 6 percent of cardholders were in the category of "native authorities." As so-called *chefs*, they were tasked with police work for the colonial administration at the lowest level of territorial unit. Self-employed tradesmen and retailers, at 19 individuals, received just 4 percent of cards issued, an indication of the marginal position of Congolese in the colonial economy. Only the category of "women" did worse, at 12 cards.[201] Tellingly, press reports on women cardholders always referred to the "wife of."[202] In line with their limited educational opportunities and

196 Chambre des représentants, *Rapport 1951*, 101. Unfortunately, only the report for 1951 includes such detailed statements about cardholders' social profile. Other authors have also made reference to this report; Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 81.

197 My calculation, based on systematic perusal of 63 issues of the *Voix du Congolais* (from no. 28 of July 1948 to no. 111 of June 1955). Measured against the 1,258 individuals with a *carte du mérite civique*, up to that point the figure had been one in five. On the total number of those granted this distinction by then, see Chambre des représentants, *Rapport sur l'administration de la colonie du Congo Belge pendant l'année 1956 présenté aux chambres législatives* (Brussels: Ministere des affaires africaines, 1957), 94.

198 Interview with Mwissa Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010.

199 Chambre des représentants, *Rapport 1951*, 101.

200 My calculation, based on systematic perusal of 63 issues of the *Voix du Congolais* (from no. 28 of July 1948 to no. 111 of June 1955).

201 Chambre des représentants, *Rapport 1951*, 101.

202 "Au tableau d'honneur de l'élite congolaise," *Voix du Congolais* no. 59 (February 1951): 86.

Fig. 13: Awarding ceremony for the *cartes du mérite civique* in Léopoldville, 1950. At the centre of the picture Antoine-Roger Bolamba, editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, is looking at the camera.

associated exclusion from the colonial working world, for the most part officially approved elite women could earn merit only as exemplary housewives. Overall, one out of every two *cartes du mérite civique* was granted to male office workers with an above-average education.

These figures reveal that allocation practices contradicted the intention of colonial policy to distinguish an "open class"[203] through the *carte du mérite civique*. Just under a year after the card's introduction, the *Voix du Congolais* was already pointing out that many illiterate people had neither heard of the card nor been informed about the criteria for obtaining it.[204] But even among the literate there was widespread ignorance about exactly what was involved. At times, interested individuals asked the district commissioner, with the utmost politeness, to inform them of the criteria, and were referred to the General Govern-

203 Speech by the colonial minister on the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in "Chronique de la vie indigène et nouvelles diverses," *Voix du Congolais* no. 28 (July 1948): 304.
204 Bolamba, "Prudence oblige," 220.

ment's decree.[205] Other newspapers published the requirements for obtaining a card, requesting that readers cut out the text and check their applications for completeness in order to make the territorial officials' work easier.[206] Due to the great demand expressed in readers' letters, newspapers such as the *Croix du Congo* published the decree again in full.[207]

What can we say about those whose application for immatriculation was crowned with success? Once again, it was the highly qualified and educated workers who made up the majority of successful applicants. Office workers in Léopoldville, where the colonial administration and many firms were based, formed the vanguard of this group, making up almost 50 percent of the immatriculated in the Belgian Congo by the end of 1954.[208] The *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation thus developed into means of distinction for office workers and public servants, with the individuals selected for these status categories most closely approximating the official ideal of the "genuine" *évolué*.

By contrast, the social group with the most comprehensive education and the closest contact with Europeans were not among the applicants: Congolese clergy. It is true that the decree on the *carte du mérite civique* promised that in theory "all natives of the Belgian Congo"[209] could apply, but in practice Congolese clergy remained the absolute exception. This is particularly surprising given that the debate after the Second World War had already referred to them as the most assimilated group.[210] This underrepresentation of clergy was politically intended. On 31 January 1949, in a letter to the provincial governors and mission-run institutions, the governor general explained why Congolese priests ought to refrain from applying: "It would seem to me a humiliation if they were to apply for the card. Their education and way of life effectively places them in a higher category and, in truth, makes them the assimilated *avant la lettre*."[211]

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205 Letter from Pascal Mbaky to the district commissioner of Léopoldville, 18 January 1949; letter from district commissioner to Mbaky, 9 February 1949, AA/GG/19669.

206 "Carte du mérite civique, Karti ya lokumu," *Mbandaka* 17 (11 September 1948): 1–2.

207 N.n., "Qui peut obtenir la Carte du mérite civique et comment faire pour l'obtenir," *Croix du Congo* (2 March 1952).

208 In total, there were 70 immatriculated at this point in time, of whom 32 were employed in the administrative service; Chambre des représentants, *Rapport sur l'administration de la colonie du Congo Belge pendant l'année 1954 présenté aux chambres législatives* (Brussels: Ministere des affaires africaines, 1955), 99. For 1950, see *Le Parquet de première instance de Léopoldville: Liste des immatriculés de la province de Léopoldville*, 1950, AA/GG/21256.

209 *Ordonnance* N°21/258 AIMO *du 12 Juillet 1948 créant une carte du mérite civique*, reprinted in *Voix du Congolais* no. 30 (September 1948): 363.

210 Letter from the governor general to the provincial governors, 31 January 1949, AA/GG/15726.

211 Ibid.

In the eyes of the colonial government, the clergy were already too assimilated for the *carte du mérite civique* and the application process was beneath their dignity. Furthermore, at this point in time plans for a reform of immatriculation granting more comprehensive legal assimilation were still being drawn up, with the clergy as a key target group. But in 1952, when immatriculation too failed to meet expectations and adhered to the same principle of selection as the *carte du mérite civique*, the colonial government advised Congolese priests not to seek this status either.

Belgian missionaries in the Congo were also sceptical about the immatriculation of Congolese brethren. The reasons emerge in correspondence between Gustaaf Hulstaert of Coquilhatville, missionary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Antoine Sohier, head of the expert commission that had drawn up a system of immatriculation at the behest of the colonial minister. Sohier saw the Congolese priests as the true addressees of immatriculation. But shortly after the introduction of the status reform, Hulstaert pointed out that the immatriculation of clergy might have deleterious effects on their role in society. As a Flemish missionary and anthropologically active chronicler of vernacular groups, Hulstaert had a critical view of assimilation policy after 1945. He perceived the *évolués* as the gravediggers of indigenous language and culture.[212] For him, the embrace of European society was synonymous with a turn away from the Congolese masses. With an eye on the situation in the metropole, Hulstaert reminded Sohier that in Belgium too the clergy were criticized for being closer to the bourgeoisie than to ordinary folk.[213] Hence, according to Hulstaert, the African clergy ought to forego privileges and remain on the same level as the masses. Only in this way, he contended, would the priests be motivated to do their best to improve the lives of the population as a whole: "In my opinion it would beneficial for them to remain subject to indigenous law and authority, as this forces them to suffer injustices and harassment along with the ordinary people."[214] Ultimately, this perspective on immatriculation spread among Congolese priests as well, who declared their wish to avoid alienation from their community.[215] They remained subject to indigenous law.

212 H. Vinck, "Gustaav Hulstaert," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer Belgische Overzeese Biografie*, vol. 8, ed. Académie Royale Science d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1998); Hunt, "Rewriting."

213 Letter from Hulstaert to Sohier, 28 July 1952, reprinted in "Correspondence Sohier – Hulstaert (1933–1960)," *Annales Aequatoria* 18 (1997): 9–238.

214 Ibid.

215 Young, *Politics*, 84.

The history of elite status in the Belgian Congo, then, includes several absurd chapters. The broad stratum of the detribalized, for whom the *carte du mérite civique* was intended, could not cope with the demanding selection procedure. And those for whom immatriculation was originally devised, namely the priests, opted not to apply for it. While the latter were regarded as too civilized, the former were seen as not civilized enough.

Based on several sets of annual statistics, we can at least make some selective statements, though no comprehensive ones, about the quantitative ratio of applications to successful outcomes. In the case of the *carte du mérite civique* we may work on the assumption that only one in three applications was successful. In 1953, for example, the figure was 59 out of 190 applications for the provinces of Léopoldville, Équateur and Orientale.[216] The figures available for specific districts suggest the same ratio. Between 1948 and 1951, the committee in Lac Léopold II issued the *carte du mérite civique* to just one third of applicants.[217]

Similarly, when it comes to immatriculation, no more than 30 percent of applications were successful colony-wide in the first year.[218] If we total up the colonial administration's official annual statistics for 1953 to 1956 and for 1958, this gives us a success rate of 46.6 percent , with 176 out of 378 applications being approved.[219]

Considering that it was first and foremost the educated and better-earning elite that contemplated applying for a change of status in the first place, the success rate must be described as meagre. In the first few years, this may still have been due to the General Government's particularly strict selection guidelines. The indications, however, are that the initial strategy of undercutting the resentment felt in the European milieu by limiting applications to "unassailable candidates"[220] became an entrenched, self-perpetuating process. In any case, the annual growth in holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and the immatriculated

216 Chambre des représentants, *Rapport 1954*, 99.

217 By that point the committee in Lac Léopold II had received just 12 applications: 4 were successful, 3 were rejected, and a decision was still to be made about the remaining 5; letter from the district commissioner to the provincial governor, 13 February 1950, AA/GG/15726.

218 On this percentage, see Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 76.

219 On the statistics for these years, see Chambre des représentants. By way of comparison, in the French empire during the inter-war period the success rate for naturalization was 96 percent in the metropole, but just 61 percent in Indochina due to the strict selection process. See E. Saada, "Une qualité par degré. Civilité et citoyenneté en situation coloniale," in *L'esclavage, la colonisation, et après. France, États-Unis, Grande-Bretagne*, eds. P. Weil and S. Dufoix (Paris: PUF, 2005).

220 Letter from Van Hove to the colonial minister, 22 July 1949, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

remained fairly constant. Between 1948 and 1955, an annual average of 126 *cartes du mérite civique* were issued.[221] The number of those granted immatriculation was smaller still: an average of 36 a year.[222]

What was the total number of those allocated to these legal categories? The official data on this extend only until January 1959. By then, 1,557 *cartes du mérite civique* and 217 immatriculations had been granted.[223] How many applicants there were, on the other hand, cannot be ascertained. But going by the success rates calculated above, the number of applicants will have been less than 5,000 for the *carte du mérite civique* and below 500 in the case of immatriculation.

Though the architects of colonial policy did not wish to create an elite through the *carte du mérite civique*, due to the strict selection procedures it soon stood for what immatriculation was supposed to imply: "a certificate of civilization."[224] This prompted the Colonial Ministry to conclude that immatriculation must remain an exception: "We may expect this acknowledgment of civilization [the *carte du mérite civique*] to become the most highly coveted status and thus the associated procedure to be the most common one,"[225] to quote one report.

We must bear in mind, however, that many applicants got neither a positive nor definitively negative answer, but instead had to exercise patience. Between 1955 and 1958, half of all applications for immatriculation resulted in a deferred decision, which was justified on the basis that more information was required about the candidates.[226] The number of those who, after a brief or lengthy

221 Between 1956 and 1958, the average number of cards issued rose to 224. These figures are based on a list drawn up by Jean-Marie Mutamba-Makombo with the help of the annual administrative reports; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 78.

222 Ibid.

223 Chambre des représentants, *Rapport sur l'administration de la colonie du Congo Belge pendant l'année 1958 présenté aux chambres législatives* (Brussels: Ministere des affaires africaines, 1959), 104. The figures from this report are also cited in the relevant academic literature: De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 152; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 78. It may be that due to a series of major events occurring in rapid succession, independence and the Congo crisis, no annual report for 1959 was produced in 1960. Nonetheless, we can glean from the press that the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation were still being applied for and granted here and there. The *Voix du Congolais*, for example, continued to publish announcements on current application processes: n.n., "Nos Avis. Immatriculation," *Voix du Congolais* no. 164 (November 1959): 686.

224 This wording appears in an internal document produced by the Colonial Ministry; *Normes pour obtenir la carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

225 *Carte du Mérite Civique*, around the end of 1952, n.n., AA/AI/4743/II/T/4.

226 In this period there was an annual average of 101 delayed decisions for 242 applications; my calculations on the basis of the official annual statistics of the *Chambre des représentants*.

wait, had to abandon the prospect of immatriculation for the time being, was smaller: on average, less than one in five was definitively rejected.[227] Hence, the selection committees always left the door to elite status slightly ajar – in the belief that this prospect would spur on applicants to press ahead with their self-perfecting.

Measured against a total population of 13 million people,[228] by the time of independence in 1960 the authorities had consistently appointed just a small number of individuals to the Congolese elite. If we tot up all holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and all the immatriculated, including their wives and children, we come to a figure of 2,325 individuals. The colonial state's appointment policy showed that not much more than 0.017 percent of the population were considered sufficiently civilized for membership of the elite.

As a result of the strict selection process, then, the door to elite status was open to just a small number of Congolese. While the applicants hoped to be let into the waiting room, for those permitted entry – through allocation to one of the two status categories – a new period of waiting began due to the only gradual process of legal equalization with Europeans. The vernacular elite's route to legal distinction and to recognition was not a direct or smooth one. It was more like an anxious circling: inside and outside the waiting room.

In several respects, appointment to the Congolese elite with the help of the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation was a source of disappointment. First, status reform was a delayed reform. The associated debate and political decision-making had dragged on for seven years, during which countless commissions and representatives of the colonial public sphere argued over the need for and scale of reform, with the various schemes repeatedly having to pass along the time-intensive official channels between metropole and colony. This tough process of negotiation ended in compromises that bore little resemblance to the initial demand for legal equality between Europeans and Congolese elite. In view of these thin pickings, in 1955, speaking before the *Conseil Colonial*, the missionary Joseph Van Wing, an ardent advocate of legal assimilation, referred to a "con"[229] and an advertising campaign designed to placate the United Nations. But even after the introduction of the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation, interested parties had their patience tested. The appointment process was delayed by a time-consuming selection procedure. Time and again, before a decision could be reached new people had to be appointed to the selection

227 My calculations based on the official statistics for the years 1955, 1956 and 1958: Chambre des représentants.

228 This is the official figure for 1957; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 80.

229 Van Wing, quoted in Lemarchand, *Political*, 42.

committees, meetings were postponed, new information was gathered about the candidates and they were advised to apply again at a later point in time. Furthermore, in case of a positive decision preparations had to be made for the awarding ceremonies and the new documents issued. As a result, it was not unusual for candidates to enquire about the progress of their applications: "I have the honour of requesting that you inform me of the answer to my letter of 26 January 1949 concerning my application for the *Carte du Mérite Civique*,"[230] wrote Antoine Omari, who we have already met as a champion of *évolué* status, to the territorial administrator after an eleven-month wait. The polite phrasing barely conceals the Congolese elite's impatience to finally enjoy the privileges – however limited they may have been – that they claimed for themselves in view of their developmental accomplishments.

Second, through the strict selection of applicants, the status reform represented an attempt by the colonial administration to regain the prerogative of interpreting who or what the vernacular elite actually was, or ought to be. Certainly, through their ideal-typical self-portrayals as "genuine" *évolués*, Congolese authors had helped shape the prevailing interpretation of the elite. But colonial policy left the decision on membership of this elite to the committees, which subjected applicants to strict scrutiny of their lifestyle.

Outside the waiting room of colonial development, the committees were in a sense the doormen of elite-making policy, ensuring strict control of admissions. With a sceptical gaze, they scrutinized the supposed civilizational maturity of applicants, assessing this, among other things, in light of education, social behaviour, work ethic and loyalty to the colonial state. But when we consider that candidates most often failed due to an "irregular marital status,"[231] it is clear that what the committees sought to create above all else was a moral elite, distinguished by monogamy, a nuclear family and the husband's fidelity. An *évolué* was a man whose family life complied with the bourgeois model of gender and Catholic moral values. The Congolese elite must not only wear a "white collar," but also have a "whiter than white" record. As a rule, the intimate investigations into applicants' private lives found what the committees were looking for: evidence of immorality. Ultimately, then, the selection committees certified that the majority of applicants were still insufficiently mature as *évolués*.

230 Letter from Antoine Omari to the head of the *Service de la population noire* in Léopoldville, 23 December 1949, AA/GG/19669.

231 As revealed by an internal document produced by the Colonial Ministry of 1956; *Immatriculés et Porteurs de la Carte du mérite civique*, AA/AI/4743/T/4.

Due to a half-hearted status reform and the bureaucratic demonstration of applicants' imperfection, the promise inherent in the discourse of perfectibility, namely that the Congolese elite could ascend within colonial society through feats of cultural adaptation, lost some of its appeal. Authors writing for the *Voix du Congolais* increasingly questioned the selection committees' demand for a "perfected black": "Of course an *évolué* is not necessarily a perfect man. No country in the world has perfect people; it is not an attribute of this world. There is thus no reason for the government to demand this of us."[232]

Antoine Rubbens, the Elisabethville-based lawyer and an influential voice in the colonial public sphere, who had expressed opposition to special legal treatment for the *évolués* since 1945, made a new intervention in Katanga's leading daily, the *Essor du Congo*. Still at pains to put forward a supposedly factual critique, he rated this form of colonial maturity test as overblown: "The issue is being looked at in the wrong way if the native elite are being subjected to tests to establish their civility that the whites would struggle to pass."[233] At the end of the day, the strict criteria suggest that Belgian colonial ideologues envisaged the Congolese elite as the extension of a colonial elite. This vernacular elite was supposed to stand out not so much through its educational qualifications as through an exemplary and morally impeccable lifestyle. In the inter-war period, however, many Europeans had failed to meet the requirements of a moral elite, as attested by reports of colonial politicians that expressed outrage, among other things, at their habitual drunkenness and sexual relationships with African women.[234] The colonial authorities sought to counter the distorted image of the civilization-bringer, as many Europeans in the colony still articulated it, with an imaginary ideal of European civilization, which the officially appointed Congolese elite had not only to emulate but to embody. After the Second World War, the new vernacular elite were supposed to conduct themselves in the way Europeans were expected to do. Acquisition of the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation depended on whether candidates satisfied these requirements. Just like their European counterparts, however, those Congolese willing to adapt and eager to join the vernacular elite failed as flawless moral paragons. The difference was that, rather than accepting the deviation of Congolese from the ideal, the selection committees responded with sanctions, rejecting their applications or stripping them of elite status. While the colonial authorities regretted the discrepancy between moral discourse and lifestyle along Europeans,

232 L. Bongongo, "Pourqoui pas moi?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 56 (November 1950): 652.

233 A. Rubbens, "La querelle de l'immatriculation," *Essor du Congo* (2 September 1950), reprinted in FEDACOL, *L'opinion publique*, 12.

234 See Lauro, "Politiques," 476 – 481; Lauro, *Coloniaux*.

there is reason to believe that they furtively welcomed this gap when it came to Congolese.

This is because, third, the vernacular elite's failure in the eyes of the colonial state enabled Belgium to legitimize the delayed political integration of its colonial subjects at the United Nations. Furthermore, Brussels could use this argument to thwart the settlers' desire for political participation. A politically emancipated Congo was a world of the distant future.

Achieving immatriculation or obtaining a *carte du mérite civique* by no means guaranteed the Congolese elite the recognition they were battling to attain. The authorities failed to make good on the promise inherent in the colonial rhetoric of civilizing, namely that one could earn equal and dignified treatment by proving one's cultural bourgeoisification. The selection process, with its meticulous scrutiny of lifestyles; the permanent need to present the awarding committees with an impeccable image; the great risk of failure and, finally, the disillusionment felt in light of the actual benefits were all a great disappointment to the Congolese elite. After the Second World War, they had expected more from the recognition of their individual efforts to develop.

It was the enduring racist discrimination practised by European residents of the Congo that made a mockery of colonial elite-making. The constant insults and slights in everyday life and in press reports, the disregard of privileges as well as the resentment felt at the granting of equality to Congolese designated as equally civilized, all of this denied the elite the respectability for which they yearned. Rather than social recognition, legal status often brought public exposure. Hence, even the bourgeoisified *évolués*, who did everything they could to approximate the ideal cultivated in elite discourse, could not evade the disrespectful treatment to which Africans were exposed in the colonial situation *per se*.

The disappointment felt by the vernacular elite was of great importance to the process of internal decolonization. For in the eyes of this frustrated elite, right from the outset the propagandized vision of a Belgian-Congolese Community, which implied the coexistence of Europeans and Congolese on an equal basis, suffered from a lack of credibility.

A community of unequals (1952 – 1956)

Belgian-Congolese visions and recognition denied

Far from the negligible new rights and privileges, it was above all the everyday experiences of those granted a *carte du mérite civique* or immatriculation that contributed to the early crisis besetting the status reforms. The Congolese elite sometimes felt that their privileges existed on paper only. In 1947, even the members of the commission on status reform had perceived Europeans' failure to recognize the *évolués* as a key problem. By ensuring a strict selection process for *évolué* status, they had hoped to expedite such recognition and thus lay the ground for peaceful coexistence.[1] It soon emerged, however, that those granted such status were particularly likely to suffer indignities.

In July 1951, in an editorial in the *Voix du Congolais*, editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba drew attention to the humiliation meted out by Europeans to bearers of the *carte du mérite civique*. Bolamba demanded that all policemen and officials in the colony receive official guidance on the rights of status-holders, this "true African elite."[2] His call having initially gone unanswered, the next year the *Voix du Congolais* again flagged up the urgent need for action, publishing the unusually harsh criticisms of an unnamed correspondent. The *carte du mérite civique*, he stated, gave its bearers no benefits whatsoever. It was in fact a "sham"; even those in possession of one were still being mocked and disparaged by many Europeans. The card was a "document *mpamba*" and thus worthless in everyday life. The correspondent also described the discontent in the *évolué* milieu, in which the prevailing view was that the *carte du mérite civique* had only been introduced due to pressure from the UN and its acquisition was now being deliberately impeded. Furthermore, the article cast doubt on the credibility of the post-war colonial reforms: "They [the *évolués*] notice that the civilizers contradict themselves in word and deed. This makes them think that everything is proceeding at an agonizingly slow pace."[3]

The General Government allowed this unadorned critique of colonial policy to appear in the *Voix du Congolais* only because it had already made plans to crack down on the misconduct of European residents and officials. The government sought to avert the nightmare scenario, rekindled by the anonymous critic in the *Voix du Congolais*, in which the official practice of appointment to the elite

1 Piron, "Le problème," 15.

2 Bolamba, "A qoui," 351–352.

3 "Chronique de la vie indigène," *Voix du Congolais* no. 75 (June 1952): 629.

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might foster rather than impede the emergence of "the embittered, the discontent and conveyors of subversive ideas."[4] Before the article had even been published, Governor General Léon Pétillon sent a circular to the colony's administrative offices complaining that "civil servants" were taking pleasure in publicly mocking the *évolués*. He cited an incident in which, while carrying out an identity check, a colonial official had described the *carte du mérite civique* as a worthless piece of paper and thrown it at its holder's feet. The governor general called on his officials to see reason, as such practices alienated the very people one would have to get along with in future. "The age of the whites' total and unconditional domination is over," he warned. The colonial administrators, then, must not approach their Congolese clerks with a complete lack of interest, treating them like "robots" to be used merely "to carry out mechanical tasks."[5] Pétillon threatened to sanction officials who continued to act in a disrespectful way towards the vernacular elite,[6] as such conduct was ultimately contrary to the colonial state's elite-making policy: "The government did in fact create the *Carte du Mérite Civique* to confer a distinction on the most deserving candidates, granting them a number of privileges and organizing the awarding ceremonies as solemn events. And then the scornful act of an inept employee working for that same government undermines all its efforts."[7]

The commitment shown by Governor General Pétillon, appointed in January 1952, to achieving recognition for the Congolese elite was an expression of the fact that, under the Christian Social government, Belgian colonial policy had triggered a new phase in colonial development.[8] Pétillon, who graduated in law from the Catholic University of Leuven, had been entrusted with senior positions at the Colonial Ministry and in the General Government since 1929. During the Second World War, it was Pétillon who, as Governor General Pierre Ryckmans's secretary, had facilitated communication with the Belgian exile government in London.[9] It was not just Pétillon's appointment as governor general by Christian Social Colonial Minister André Dequae, who had succeeded Pierre

4 Ibid., 628.

5 Letter from the governor general to the provincial governors, 23 September 1952, AA/GG/6150.

6 Letter from the governor of Équateur province to the district commissioners and territorial administrators, 15 October 1952, AA/GG/6150.

7 Letter from the governor general to the provincial governors, 23 September 1952, AA/GG/6150.

8 For a detailed portrait of Pétillon, see A. Stenmans and F. Reyntjens, *La pensée politique du gouverneur général Pétillon* (Brussels: Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer, 1993); A.-R. Bolamba, "Hommage à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général Pétillon," *Voix du Congolais* no. 70 (January 1952).

9 Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 10.

Wigny in 1950, that reflects the continuities of personnel characteristic of Belgian post-war policy in the Congo. The post of Pétillon's secretary general went to Gustave Sand, who had earlier done much to shape elite-making policy as recipient of the *évolué* memorandum of 1944 and as head of the AIMO.[10]

Henceforth, elite-making policy, with its focus on assimilation, was integrated into a new doctrine of Belgian colonial rule that sought to alter the relationship between Congolese and Europeans. In a two-hour speech before the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, broadcast on *Radio Congo Belge*, Pétillon thus pledged that the European and African residents of the colony would enjoy a shared future. He emphasized the "unavoidable continuance of the duality of the Congolese population," which, in addition to Congolese, included those Belgians who had "settled without intending to return [...] and are thus resident in this country."[11] Pétillon referred in paradigmatic terms to the establishment of a "Belgian-Congolese Community."[12] The "Congo of tomorrow" was to be based on the "association" between, and coming together of, Congolese and Belgians.[13] In addition to the introduction of a "status for the African elite," he described the integration of status-holders into "European society"[14] as a first step in this direction.

The notion of a "community" was inspired by the major European colonial powers, which had redefined the political and social relationship between colony and metropole after the Second World War as part of their efforts to lend new legitimacy to colonial rule. As mentioned earlier, in October 1946 France had already recast its colonial empire by proclaiming the Fourth Republic. The *Union Française* aspired to gradually place the residents of continental France and those of its overseas territories on an equal footing in terms of their rights and obligations, regardless of their religion, culture or ancestry.[15] Meanwhile, howev-

10 A.-R. Bolamba, "Monsieur Sand, Secrétaire Général," *Voix du Congolais* no. 70 (January 1952): 8.

11 "Ouverture solennelle du Conseil de Gouvernement. Le discours de M. le Gouverneur Général Pétillon," *Voix du Congolais* no. 78 (September 1952): 535.

12 Pétillon first mentioned the Belgian-Congolese Community in a speech during his first official visit to Elisabethville in February 1952. Though he initially asked journalists not to mention this watchword in their articles, the *Voix du Congolais* had already reported it by March 1952; A.-R. Bolamba, "Réflexion," *Voix du Congolais* no. 72 (March 1952): 127. In his memoirs, Pétillon provides detailed reflections on the background to the speech; see L. Pétillon, *Récit-Congo 1929 – 1958* (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1985), 259 – 263.

13 Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 38 – 39.

14 "Ouverture solennelle du Conseil de Gouvernement. Le discours de M. le Gouverneur Général Pétillon," *Voix du Congolais* no. 78 (September 1952): 534 – 535.

15 See Cooper, *Africa*, 38 – 41; Eckert, *Herrschen*, 97 – 110.

er, African delegates in the National Assembly had extended their demands for citizenship rights and socio-political assimilation into the metropole to the degree that France had begun to gradually distance itself from a policy of integration. In view of the supposedly disastrous consequences of the comprehensive incorporation of Africans into the political structures of the mother country, some French colonial officials went so far as to praise the Portuguese model of the restrictive integration of preselected educated elites into merely consultative organs, as also practised by the Belgian colonial state.[16] While France and its colonies had moved closer together,[17] after 1945 Great Britain had embraced decentralization. Within the overarching framework of the Commonwealth, the various territories of the British empire were granted varying forms of self-determination and political participation. In addition to states that had already become independent, such as India, the Commonwealth included colonies in Africa whose inhabitants, following initial experiences of government at the local level, were promised full responsibility for their political fate.[18] This process had advanced furthest in the Gold Coast, West Africa. In the wake of mass protests and strikes, an electoral victory gave the Convention's People Party a majority in the colony's legislative councils. The British governor thus had to come to terms with Kwame Nkrumah as the head of a Ghanaian cabinet, a man who had previously been arrested as a fighter for independence socialized in London in anti-imperialist and pan-Africanist circles.[19] Portugal had followed the French model of imperial integration, at least rhetorically, and, since the constitutional reform of 1951, no longer viewed its African possessions as colonies, but as overseas provinces.[20] As the leader of the *Estado Novo*, António de Oliveira Salazar underlined the distinctive character of the Portuguese empire, established in the fifteenth century, and invoked "a brotherhood of peoples, cemented by centuries of peaceful lives and Christian understanding."[21] He thus rejected as interference in Portugal's internal affairs the pressure for reform emanating from the UN, which regarded Portuguese Africa as consisting of "non-autonomous territories." The Portuguese empire remained a dictatorship.[22]

16 See Keese, *Living*, 248–249.
17 Cooper, *Colonialism*, 153.
18 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 247; Osterhammel and Jansen, *Dekolonisation*, 43–44.
19 Cooper, *Africa*, 52–53.
20 For a detailed account, see Bandeira Jéronimo and Costa Pinto, "A Modernising Empire?," 56–57.
21 Speech by Salazar of 11 July 1947, quoted in ibid.
22 Albertini, *Dekolonisation*, 589.

Belgian politicians concerned with colonial policy kept an eye on the reforms carried out by other empires. Given the unintended dynamics they unleashed, which saw the African elite putting forward ever more far-reaching demands, they regarded these strategies as having failed. Guided by the notion that things moved at a slower pace in the Congo than in other parts of Africa, for a long time they felt no need to explore the potential for a novel form of association between metropole and colony. As early as 1947, in the wake of their trip through the Congo, Belgian senators had in fact stated, in the style characteristic of French integration policy, that the area would "one day be a Belgian overseas territory and its inhabitants citizens, who will participate in the transformed public life of metropolitan and African Belgium." Yet such ideas were restricted to a small group of experts.[23] Similar plans for reform first appeared in the early 1950s in strategy papers produced by the PSC's Colonial Commission, established in 1946. Pierre Wigny, who had stepped down as colonial minister shortly before, became chair of this commission in spring 1952; in a leading Belgian daily he had already presented the "formation of a new community of whites and blacks" as a guarantee that "the Congo [would remain] definitively Belgian."[24] The new colonial strategy adopted by the governing PSC assumed the "indissoluble unity of European Belgium and [its] overseas [territories]," but left open whether the envisaged form of association should entail a political federation or a union.[25] In the first instance the new policy merely called for reform of the colonial state's institutions. The goal was to prevent the domination of a white minority and ensure close links between Belgium and the Congo in order to achieve the controlled and gradual introduction of democratic political structures in the colony.[26] While the *Parti Libéral* and the PSB continued to show a lack of interest in colonial issues, the plans drawn up for the future of the Congo bore a Christian Social signature.

The new doctrine of colonial rule, however, was made public not in Brussels but in Léopoldville, where Catholic Governor General Pétillon made the case for the "Belgian-Congolese Community" in 1952.[27] In consultation with the Colonial Ministry, Pétillon also held out the prospect of advancing the territory's political development through measures that dovetailed with the cautious programme put forward by the Christian Social Colonial Commission.

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23 Report of the senators' visit, quoted in Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 198.

24 Quoted in Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 120.

25 Internal strategy paper, quoted in ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 "Ouverture solennelle du Conseil de Gouvernement. Le discours de M. le Gouverneur Général Pétillon," *Voix du Congolais* no. 78, September 1952, 534.

There were two aspects to the Belgian-Congolese Community, though its architects were vague about what concrete form these ought to take. First, it implied a notion of political order encompassing metropole and colony. There was a consensus that Belgium and the Congo, as well as Belgians and Congolese, must be associated as a political community. But there should be no rush to introduce the relevant reforms.[28] Here, those responsible adhered to the founding principle of Belgian colonial rule, whose superiority they derived from observation of events, some of them occurring in breathless succession, in British and French Africa. While progressive voices within the Catholic milieu insisted that the prevailing paternalism must give way to self-government, the consensus was that the "political education of the natives" alone would require several decades. A conference in Brussels on the political future of the Belgian Congo, attended by scholars from several Belgian universities, favoured the idea of first familiarizing Congolese with political processes at the local level.[29] Guy Malengreau, professor of law at the Catholic University of Leuven, considered the Native Administrations in the British protectorate of Tanganyika a model worth emulating.[30] There, Africans were integrated into councils at the lowest administrative level only and learned the principles of Western democracy under the supervision of the colonial state.[31] The reform project being considered at the same time by the Belgian Colonial Ministry, which provided for the participation of Congolese and Europeans on equal terms in select municipal councils, also resembled the administrative reform in Tanganyika, where an equal number of Asians, Europeans and Africans were appointed to council posts. It is no coincidence that Belgium took its lead from the reforms in Tanganyika: of the British empire's African possessions, this east African territory was viewed as particularly backward.[32]

For the Colonial Ministry, more urgent than reforms facilitating political participation was the step-by-step implementation of the social vision underpinning the concept of a Belgian-Congolese Community, a vision the ministry declared the prerequisite for political association. In a keynote speech, Governor General Pétillon thus called for solidarity between Congolese and Belgians in the colony: "With immediate effect, our policy seeks to achieve a convergence of cultures

28 Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 84–85; W. B. Norton, "Review," *African Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (1969): 163.

29 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 234–245.

30 G. Malengreau, "La formation politique des Congolais," *Problèmes d'Afrique centrale* 14, no. 4 (1951).

31 Ibid, 235. On Tanganyika's reformed local administration, see Eckert, *Herrschen*.

32 Ibid, 114.

and interests. If we pursue the goal of an association, a union, without being blown off course, then we will have the best prospect of a favourable outcome."[33]

As a concept of social order, the Belgian-Congolese Community served not least to bolster an ideological counter-offensive, through which Belgian colonial policy once again sought to resist the pressure for reform emanating from the UN.[34] The so-called Belgian thesis aimed to detach the international debate on the social and political integration of supposedly backward populations from the context of colonial power relations. Did the already independent countries of Brazil and India not have to struggle with a "native problem" as well? Did these countries not, therefore, have to answer to the international community just as much as the European colonial powers? It was with questions such as these that former governor general Pierre Ryckmans rebuffed the UN Trusteeship Council as Belgian envoy. In the mid-1950s, Belgian apologists for colonialism sought to reframe the colonial question as a global social question concerning the "relations between the races."[35]

One of the key goals of the Belgian-Congolese Community was to breathe new life into the colonial state's elite-making policy. With this social vision, Pétillon was responding in part to the Congolese elite's mounting criticisms of the disappointing status reforms and persistent discrimination in everyday life. The *Voix du Congolais* acclaimed the "policy of full integration" of the Congolese elite into European society: "This assimilation [...] admits of the greatest hopes. We readily endorse this political doctrine, which aims to ensure the advancement of the black man,"[36] wrote Antoine-Roger Bolamba. Henceforth, then, elite-mak-

33 "Ouverture solennelle de Conseil de Gouvernement. Le discours de M. le Gouverneur Général Pétillon," *Voix du Congolais* no. 78 (September 1952): 535.

34 On this paragraph, see Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 138 – 139.

35 In the mid-1950s, scholars and experts from the United States and Europe discussed "race relations" as a global challenge. For Great Britain and France, given the increased immigration from the colonies to the metropole, such relations were increasingly a national question as well. One expression of the scholarly interest in this is the anthology arising from a UNESCO conference, which includes articles by renowned authors such as Herbert Blumer and Georges Balandier; see A. W. Lind, ed., *Race Relations in World Perspective* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1955). On the emergence of institutionalized research on "race relations" in Great Britain, see R. Tamme, "Von den dark strangers zum Subproletariat: Wissenschaftliche Deutungen der multiethnischen Gesellschaft in Großbritannien von den 1950er bis Anfang der 1970er Jahre," in *Das Andere denken. Repräsentationen von Migration in Westeuropa und den USA im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. G. Metzler (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013); G. Metzler, "Einleitung," in *Das Andere denken. Repräsentationen von Migration in Westeuropa und den USA im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. G. Metzler (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013).

36 A.-R. Bolamba, "Une politique de pleine intégration," *Voix du Congolais* no. 82 (January 1953): 3.

ing policy had to be assessed partly in light of the place not just assigned to but actually occupied by the vernacular elite within the Belgian-Congolese Community.

Humiliated Congolese, imperfect Belgians

For Belgian colonial policy, the officially appointed Congolese elite represented its first interlocutor as it sought to cautiously and gradually construct a Belgian-Congolese community. Holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and the immatriculated, as individuals "tested by the colonial state," were to be absorbed into the circles of European colonial society as a culturally assimilated bourgeois *avant-garde*. Yet the heated debate on the status reforms in the colonial public sphere had left the relationship between Europeans, particularly within the settlers' milieu, and the Congolese elite, highly tense. Moreover, the European population included avowed opponents of elite-making policy, who now took up the cudgels against the idea of a Belgian-Congolese Community as well.

To expedite the development of a Belgian-Congolese Community, the General Government initiated several projects from 1953 on. Even after a change of government in Brussels that sent the PSC into opposition in April 1954, there was continuity of personnel and substance within the Socialist-Liberal coalition when it came to elite-making policy. In addition to Governor General Pétillon, who was linked with the PSC but remained in office, Colonial Minister Auguste Buisseret of the *Parti Libéral* also supported the idea of a Belgian-Congolese Community. In view of further upheavals in the colonial world – the independence of Libya in 1951, the defeat of the French army in Indochina and the start of the Algerian War in 1954 – the new Belgian government expected the Belgian-Congolese Community to constitute an attractive alternative to a struggle for independence, one that could ensure the perpetuation of colonial rule.[37]

At the behest of Liberal colonial minister Buisseret, the officials serving in the various administrative units were instructed to allow holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and the immatriculated to participate in the social and cultural life of European colonial society. Every opportunity must be taken to publicly

37 The "community" was undoubtedly a ground-breaking political concept in the 1950s. During this period, Western European governments were deliberating over ways of harnessing possible forces for unification and pacification through an economic or military community. On the ways in which the formation of a European community was interwoven with the development of a late colonial European-African community, see P. Hansen and S. Jonsson, *Eurafrica. The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

demonstrate the social integration of the Congolese elite.[38] The General Government also availed itself of the tools of "social engineering," which had already been brought to bear in the colonial state's efforts to create an elite. The *Groupement Culturel Belgo-Congolais* in Léopoldville, discussed earlier, served as the prototype for a number of associations established across the colony.[39] These associations took up the cause of uniting the official vernacular elite with the European population.[40] The General Government and the Colonial Ministry requested annual reports on the activities of these associations in the various provinces.[41] These documents extolled the associations as the "shared foundation" of the "Eurafrican community":[42] through conviviality today they were supposed to pre-empt the society of tomorrow. Much like bourgeois associations in Western Europe, they were characterized by an "excess of utopianism."[43] But beyond these sheltered islands of social utopia, the promise of a respectful encounter between Europeans and Congolese seldom bore up to reality.

The influence of the colonial government on its officials, scattered across the territory, again proved limited. Complaints of discrimination against status-holders, which the colonial government continued to receive, demonstrated that the ideology of the merging of Europeans and vernacular elite did not always penetrate down into the local administration. In April 1953, for example, an anonymous account of the abuse meted out to a holder of the *carte du mérite civique*

38 See for example the letter from the governor of Équateur province to territorial officials, 20 September 1954, AA/GG/6150.

39 Here we can discern parallels with the United Kenya Club, founded in Nairobi in 1946 as the forerunner of a "multi-racial society." See D. Connan, "La Décolonisation des clubs Kenyans. Socialisation et constitution morale des élites africaines dans le Kenya contemporain" (PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, 2014).

40 Among others, Patrice Lumumba was involved in the foundation of the *Union Belgo- Congolaise* in Stanleyville in 1956; he also held the post of vice-president. Correspondence between association and district commissioner, 22 February 1956, AA/GG/17717; Mutamba-Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba*.

41 A list arranged by province includes all Belgian-Congolese associations together with their annual activities. It indicates that in 1956 there was a total of 16 such associations in Léopoldville, one in Matadi, 35 in Kasai, 21 in Katanga, 5 in Kivu, 8 in Orientale and 19 in Équateur. In the case of certain provinces, however, the local *évolué* associations, in which Europeans were involved chiefly as advisors and patrons, were included in these figures; AA/A54/Infopresse/51; letter from the governor general to the colonial minister, 23 December 1955, AA/GG/18356.

42 Letter from the governor of Équateur province to the officials in his administrative area, 19 October 1955, AA/GG/6150.

43 Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit*, 53.

in the town of Inongo was submitted to the *Voix du Congolais*.[44] While the article was not published, it prompted the General Government to look into the allegations. The newspaper was still serving as a medium for monitoring the implementation of colonial reforms.

The authorities' investigation brought to light an incident in which Herman M. played a central role. He was the foreman in a joiner's workshop dedicated to state construction projects and the active president of the 130-member *Cercle d'Action Catholique*, which championed evangelization and acted as mediator in so-called "domestic disputes."[45] Herman M. had received the *carte du mérite civique* in late October 1951. The awarding ceremony, as the *Voix du Congolais* reported, was also attended by a majority of the 2,000 Congolese residents.[46] Less than three weeks later, the claim did the rounds that the publicly honoured M. had endured vicious slurs. Following a difference of opinion, a European colonial official had branded him a "shit-eater"[47] in the presence of his colleagues. In the course of the investigation initiated by the General Government, Herman M. explained to the territorial administrator who had been called in to investigate that he had taken these "insults" on the chin and had not reported them. He also maintained that he had not contacted the *Voix du Congolais*.[48] The district commissioner, duly reporting this to the provincial governor, came to the defence of the accused colonial official. He went so far as to justify his conduct by mentioning that the incident had occurred early in the morning, a part of the day when the tropical climate made many "colonial gentlemen" irascible.[49] In the eyes of the district commissioner, this was not a case of slander, but a "rebuke, of a somewhat brutal nature, expressed in rather vulgar terms." Conversely, he accused the anonymous correspondent for the *Voix du Congolais* of a lack of trust in the local administration and of seeking to bring the Europeans of Inongo

44 Letter from the governor general to the governor of Léopoldville province, 15 April 1953, AA/GG/15726.

45 This association was a branch of the Scheut mission's Catholic Action organization. The divisions for women, men and youths met up to five times a week. This emerges from an annual report on the association's activities dispatched by Herman M. to the Catholic Action office in Léopoldville; report on the *Cercle d'action catholique d'Oshwe*, 9 December 1950, KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4.

46 "Au tableau d'honneur de l'Elite congolaise," *Voix du Congolais* no. 69 (December 1951): 691.

47 In the original: "*mangeur de Tufi*." *Tufi* means 'excrement' in Lingala. See letter from Herman M. to the territorial official, 21 April 1953, AA/GG/15726.

48 Ibid.

49 The tropical climate was often blamed for Europeans' misconduct in the colonies. On this explanatory model, see Lauro, *Coloniaux*, 55–58.

into disrepute.[50] No mention at all was made of how such public abuse must have impacted on the holder of the *carte du mérite civique*. The local official was concerned solely with defending the area's Europeans. The problem of recognition suffered by the Congolese elite was less the result of colonial officials' ignorance than of their unwillingness to show respect.

This affair brought home to the colonial government once again that the "climate of cooperation"[51] invoked by Governor General Pétillon was not something that could be decreed. Local colonial officials arbitrarily flouting the colonial government's instructions was not a phenomenon restricted to the Belgian Congo, but also occurred, for example, in the French colonies; after 1945, the abolition of the *indigénat* was simply ignored in some places.[52]

In 1954, the General Government began to document incidents in which holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and the immatriculated were discriminated against. Such cases had seen a further increase since the authorities began to propagate a Belgian-Congolese Community.[53] Even the young King Baudouin, who expressed vociferous support for this Community during his tour through the colony in 1955 and had described "relations between people" as the greatest challenge of colonial society,[54] was largely ignored by the European population. The more the authorities pressed for convergence between the Congolese elite and European society, the more Europeans sought to emphasize their differences.

This development must be viewed against the background of increased European immigration to the Belgian Congo. While the number of Europeans was just 3,000 in 1908, by 1945 it had grown to 36,080, tripling to almost 100,000 by 1958. The European population was also becoming ever more Belgian: in 1945, 65.5 percent were of Belgian nationality, and no less than 78.8 percent in 1959.[55] With the slogan "100,000 Belgian settlers within ten years, otherwise the Congo will no longer be Belgian," in 1952 the settler associations launched a campaign for a policy of increased immigration and privileged treatment for the Belgian colonial population.[56] Those who immigrated in the 1950s were no

50 Letter from the district commissioner of Lac Léopold II to the governor of Léopoldville province, 22 May 1953, AA/GG/15726.

51 "Ouverture solennelle du Conseil de Gouvernement, Le discours de M. le Gouverneur Général Pétillon," *Voix du Congolais* no. 78, September 1952, 535.

52 See Mann, "What was the Indigénat?," 350.

53 See files on "Security: Racist Discrimination," AA/GG/18356.

54 Young, *Politics*, 52.

55 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 352.

56 Stengers, *Congo*, 223.

longer overwhelmingly single men, but increasingly families as well. As the new European presence engendered the emergence of a colonial bourgeoisie, European residential areas, as well as the realms of consumption and recreation, changed due to the new clientele of nuclear families.[57] Europeans now also settled beyond the industrialized province of Katanga and the agriculturally strong regions in Kivu and Kasai: the Belgian Congo was gradually developing into a settler colony. The trend towards the spatial and social segregation of the Congolese population intensified as a result of this demographic shift. It is one of the ironies of the history of decolonization that the propagation of a Belgian-Congolese Community coincided with an increased need for distinction on the part of Europeans. The hyphen in this phrase may have been imagined as articulating a social bond. But in practice it became a line of division.

To promote greater recognition for the Congolese elite and compliance with anti-discrimination policies among the European population, from 1955 on the General Government mandated extensive propaganda campaigns. A pamphlet entitled *From One Person to Another* was published, which aimed to familiarize European readers with the reorientation of colonial policy.[58] The author of the text was Jean-Marie Domont, the patron of the *Voix du Congolais* who had already written the manners book *Élite noire*. Now Domont was educating Europeans about "relations between races."[59] The pamphlet, written in French and Dutch, was systematically distributed throughout the colony by the General Government. In addition, talks inspired by this text were held in firms, associations and administrative offices to promote greater tolerance for the vernacular elite.[60] In the spirit of the Belgian-Congolese Community, the colonial government extended its programme of colonial subject formation to the European population.

Congolese authors readily seized on the fact the General Government was publicly criticizing Europeans. In articles and letters, they expressed indignation at their ignoble treatment at European hands, which, they contended, contradicted the basic thrust of the new social order. In Elisabethville, for example, the po-

57 For a vivid account, see Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 244–246.

58 J.-M. Domont, *D'homme à homme/Van mens tot mens* (Léopoldville: Service de l'information du Gouvernement général du Conge Belge, 1955).

59 On the planning and conception of the pamphlet and the subsequent speaking tours, see correspondence between Domont and the governor general, 1955, GG/AA/5952.

60 See for example the letter from the governor general to the governor of Équateur province, 24 February 1956, AA/GG/5952.

lice denied the editor-in-chief of *évolué* periodical *Etoile-Nyota* his certified right, as holder of the *carte du mérite civique*, to go out during the nightly curfew.[61]

A book by Thomas Kanza, published in 1956, attracted particular interest. As the top pupil at the Scheut mission school of St. Anne, Kanza, from Léopoldville, had been selected by his former teacher Raphael de la Kethulle to study at the Catholic University of Leuven, as one of the first Congolese to do so. After his return to the colony, the trained educator first worked as a teacher at the St. Anne mission school.[62] In his book *Pays de deux évolués*, Kanza, deploying the familiar language of perfectibility, addressed himself to the inhabitants of the Belgian Congo. The title itself indicated that the author was reminding not just Congolese, but also Europeans of their duty to improve their behaviour and manners.[63] The *topos* of the imperfect *évolué* was transformed in the mid-1950s: now it included Europeans as well.[64]

Differences, not equality

But it was not just because of the discrimination and exclusion they suffered that the Congolese elite was dissatisfied. The ideology of a "community of equals" was still being hindered by the unequal distribution of rights.

Initially, the political doctrine of a Belgian-Congolese Community seemed to encourage the vernacular elite to give voice to their discontent. In Léopoldville there were protests in 1953, albeit behind closed doors, due to the meagre scope of the long-anticipated status reforms. A group of the immatriculated paid a visit *en bloc* to the king's procurator in Léopoldville, who was largely responsible for the application process. They returned their immatriculation documents to him in protest.[65] In March 1953, Jacques Massa,[66] as Congolese repre-

61 Letter from Bonaventura Makonga to the head of AIMO in Elisabethville, 29 November 1955, AA/GG/6302.

62 During the Congo Crisis, Thomas Kanza was the Congolese representative at the UN. He was ambassador to Sweden when he died in 2004. On the background to his university years in Leuven, see E. Coppieters, "De Verering van Tata Raphael: Pater de la Kethulle de Ryhove (1890 – 1956)," *Bulletin des Séances* 13, no. 3 (1967); T. Kanza, *Sans rancune* (London: Scotland, 1965).

63 T. Kanza, *Congo, pays de deux évolués* (Léopoldville: Actualités Africaines, 1956).

64 A former pupil of Thomas Kanza related that he urged him to resist the typical practice of serving Europeans in shops first. As a teacher, he is said to have taught his pupils that equal and respectful treatment was imperative regardless of skin colour; interview with Anselme Mavuela, Kinshasa, 31 August 2010.

65 Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 108 – 109.

sentative on the *Députation Permanente*, which was considering issues relating to elite status at the behest of the General Government, called for the immatriculated to be granted equality with Europeans and for the abolition of all forms of discrimination. Massa, a former seminarian and former employee at the OCA, demanded that the immatriculated finally be treated as consistently promised to the Congolese elite: with respect and on an equal footing "as mature and civilized human beings."[67]

Despite these calls, the colonial government did not allow itself to be hurried. Responding to them directly, before the *Députation Permanente* Governor General Pétillon instead advocated holding firm to the gradual social integration of the elite: "Immatriculation thus appears simultaneously as recognition of a certain assimilation and as a pledge, of a precise and solemn character, to those who benefit from it, that they will be integrated, to an ever increasing degree and in every area, into the group of Belgians and Europeans."[68]

As the first token of the fulfilment of this promise, Pétillon issued a list of instructions to the colonial administrative offices, which were intended to clarify how one ought to deal with the new vernacular elite in future. The colonial government wished to initiate the shift of policy on the social integration of the elite not just through official decrees but also by granting unofficial privileges.[69] Pétillon thus demanded that when it came to legal provisions disadvantageous to Congolese, the immatriculated be treated with forbearance.

In 1953, Pétillon also implemented several confidence-building measures to advance the oft-invoked "convergence of the races": an impartial review of requests by the immatriculated to move to European residential districts, the key criteria being compliance with hygiene regulations and a high standard of living; unconditional freedom of movement in towns and cities and when travelling through the colony; simplified admission to European schools for their children;

66 Jacques Massa was granted immatriculation on 27 July 1953; list of the immatriculated in Léopoldville province 1953–1955, AA/GG/21256.

67 Request by Jacques Massa at the 24th session of the *Députation Permanente* on 26 March 1953, quoted in Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 206. See also Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués," 109. On Massa's biography, see Artigue, *Qui sont*, 202–203.

68 Speech by Governor General Pétillon before the *Députation Permanente* on 4 May 1953, quoted in A. R. Bolamba, "La communication de M. le Gouverneur Général," *Voix du Congolais* no. 87 (June 1953): 372. Bolamba rated the speech as an important contribution to "social relations in present-day Congo" and it inspired favorable comments from a number of Congolese authors; "Immatriculation et Assimilation," *Voix du Congolais* no. 87 (June 1953): 368–371.

69 Letter from the governor general to the provincial governors, 25 April 1953, AA/GG/11096. Here Pétillon explained that "the blacks' admittance to civil law is just one minor aspect of this policy."

and access to first and second class on trains and ships. In addition, the operators of hotels and cultural sites were to be required to grant the immatriculated admission. In particular, the governor general planned to invite the immatriculated to public and cultural events, which he expected to have "a gratifying effect on the attitudes of the European public."[70] The General Government also had new symbolic privileges in mind for holders of the *carte du mérite civique*. Like the immatriculated, they were now to enjoy greater participation in the life of colonial society and be admitted to superior travel classes.[71]

But the attempt to keep the Congolese elite happy with the odd improvement here and there failed at the level of implementation. In practice, once again holders of the *carte du mérite civique* and the immatriculated quickly came up against the limits of these privileges. In the *Voix du Congolais*, authors complained that when travelling by boat they continued to be denied entry to the European class.[72] In October 1955, Patrice Lumumba expressed his indignation at the restricted access for Congolese to places frequented by the European population of Stanleyville, which shone a negative light on the "relations between the races."[73] Investigations in Elisabethville in 1956 revealed that just three out of the 18 proprietors of hotels, restaurants and cafés who had been questioned permitted members of the Congolese elite entry. They would rather put up with complaints of discrimination, they typically explained, than lose their European customers.[74]

We may assume that it is no coincidence that the colonial administration filed such incidents under the heading "racist discrimination."[75] The return of racist taxonomies, which were proscribed in the international order after 1945 even in the colonial context, was linked with the Belgian Congo's development into a settler colony. In the settler colonies of southern Africa, and thus in immediate proximity to the province of Katanga, it was still common to "biologize" Europeans' "civilizational superiority" and to refer to their rule over Africans as natural.[76] In this racist worldview, the "capacity for [cultural] development"

70 Ibid.

71 *Carte du mérite civique*, 1952, AA/AI 4743/II/T/4.

72 For a travel report lamenting undignified treatment on ships operated by Otraco, to which even Africans with elite status were subject, see A. Mongita, "Ce que j'ai vu sur le Lokele bâtiment flottant de l'Otraco," *Voix du Congolais* no. 115 (October 1955).

73 See P. Lumumba, "A propos l'accès des Congolais dans les établissements publics pour Européens," *Voix du Congolais* no. 115 (October 1955).

74 Letter from the assistant to the district commissioner in Elisabethville to the governor of Katanga province, 3 December 1956, AA/GG/6302.

75 See the files "Security: Racist Discrimination," AA/GG/18356.

76 Marx, "Siedlerkolonien," 91.

and "perfectibility" was disputed "through recourse to Africans' inability to learn."[77] In the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, founded in 1953, the propaganda extolling an "association of races" did a poor job of concealing the claim to political supremacy of the European settler minority.[78] In the Congo of tomorrow advocated by settler lobbies in the mid-1950s, *évolués* eager to assimilate, along with their calls for social and legal equality, would have gone unheeded.

The fact that the vernacular elite still faced forms of discrimination typical of the colonial situation was one reason for the early crisis of the Belgian-Congolese Community. The colonial government's still hesitant attitude to implementing reforms and the European population's rejectionist stance were another increasing source of disappointment within the elite. Last but not least, political participation was still unequally distributed between Europeans and elite Congolese. Certainly, since 1951 the number of Congolese members on the councils serving the various administrative units had increased, and with a few exceptions these were holders of the *carte du mérite civique* or the immatriculated. But the presence of equal numbers of Europeans and Congolese in this context by no means reflected their share of the total population.[79]

In addition, the fact that the Liberal-Socialist government had taken power with no alternative plan for the political development of the Congo was a major problem. The implementation of the Christian Social reform strategy was delayed. In November 1954, Colonial Minister Auguste Buisseret explained to US-American journalists that "we have temporarily suspended the political reforms, as we are convinced that economic development and efforts to improve the social structure ought to come first."[80] In communication with other ministers, Buisseret called for "the authorization of elections, in whatever form, to be delayed as long as possible."[81] Prime Minster Achille Van Acker of the PSB also took the view that votes for Congolese would be "dangerous."[82] Those in charge

77 Ibid.

78 On projects of modernization and multi-ethnic "nation-building" in the semi-independent Rhodesia and Nyasaland, see J. Tischler, *Light and power for a multiracial nation: the Kariba Dam scheme in the Central African Federation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). From 1951 on, the ideology of "multi-racial" politics was widespread in areas under British rule as well. On Tanganyika and Kenya, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 114.

79 See Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 67–68.

80 Buisseret, 2 November 1954, quoted in Brausch, *Belgian Administration*, 4.

81 Buissserat, 17 February 1956, quoted in Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 118.

82 Van Acker, quoted in ibid., 362.

of Belgian colonial policy thus continued to believe they had colonial development under control and that they could initiate reforms at a leisurely pace.

The School War and manifestos of self-determination

Nonetheless, under the Socialist-Liberal government the foundations of Belgian colonial rule began to unravel. The trigger was school reforms instigated in parallel in Belgium and the Congo, which brought colony and metropole closer together against the background of a political controversy: as a Belgian-Congolese community of conflict.

In Belgium, the ideological rifts between the *Parti Libéral* and the PSC had broken open again in the early 1950s. Once again, the two parties were split on the question of whether schooling should be imparted by state or church institutions.[83] Following the School War of the 1880s, church-run schools dominated in Belgium, but it proved possible to defuse the smouldering conflict between the two parties through a series of compromises in favour of state schools. But when the PSC attained an absolute majority in 1950, it gave preferential treatment to the confessional school system. With reference to the human rights adopted in 1948, the PSC argued self-confidently that parents must be free to choose what kind of school their children attended and that, in light of the growing tendency to embrace the Christian faith after the Second World War, it was imperative to support church institutions. The PSC's major programme of state investment in secondary and university education met with resistance from Socialists and Liberals. Following a joint anti-clerical election campaign, the PSB and the *Parti Libéral* then took power in 1954. Now they attempted to tip the scales in favour of state schools. What followed was the so-called "Second School War," in which the Catholic Church, the PSC and the influential Catholic milieu mobilized large parts of society. In 1955 alone, on average demonstrations took place every other day, bringing a total of 650,620 protesters onto the streets, three times as many as in preceding years. A petition against the school reforms attracted the support of one quarter of the Belgian population. It was not until 1958 that the School War was brought to an end when, following its re-election, the PSC managed to achieve a cross-party compromise in the shape of the so-called "School Pact."

83 On the following remarks, see Dujardin and Dumoulin, *L'union*, 52 – 77.

The School War also extended to the Belgian Congo. While it did not engender comparable social upheavals there, it had unintended consequences due to the close cooperation on schooling between the colonial state and missions.[84]

Under the Christian Social government, much as in the metropole the mission-run schools in the Congo received more financial support from 1950 on. In addition, the Belgian Jesuits were permitted to establish the first Congolese institute of higher education, the Catholic University of Lovanium near Léopoldville, which cooperated closely with the Catholic University of Leuven.[85] The PSC thus torpedoed the agreement reached between the Belgian parties after the war, which envisaged the founding of a university in the colony funded by all the Belgian universities. Furthermore, when secret treaty negotiations between the Belgian Foreign Ministry and the Vatican concerning a reform of the colonial education system came to light shortly before the parliamentary election, the Congo began to feature in the anti-clerical election campaign that brought the Socialist-Liberal coalition to power in 1954.[86]

Colonial Minister Auguste Buisseret was one of the representatives of the *Parti Libéral* who had campaigned for a reform of the school system in the Belgian Congo since the end of the Second World War.[87] As vice-president of the Senate, in 1947 he took part in the senatorial visit to the Congo, arguing vehemently that the "education and intellectual development of the Africans is the state's responsibility."[88] Buisseret now set about continuing the contested reforms in education policy that, under Liberal colonial minister Robert Godding, had been of a merely experimental character when the first state schools for European children were established in 1946 – 1947.

Shortly after he assumed office, it was Buisseret's task to open the Catholic University of Lovanium in Léopoldville. He used this event as a platform to announce the construction of state schools in every province in the colony. Shortly afterwards, a commission appointed by him reported that the Catholic mission schools' teaching staff suffered a number of shortcomings, while the schools themselves were excessively expensive to run. Further, the schools had neglected the training of skilled workers, which were essential to the local industries, while placing too much emphasis on their function as seminaries. Composed in an anti-clerical tone, the commission's report referred to the Congo as the "one re-

84 Boyle, "School Wars," 462.

85 On the history of Lovanium, see Monaville, "Decolonizing the University."

86 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 77 – 82.

87 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 164.

88 Buisseret, quoted in J.-B. Cuyvers, "Auguste Buisseret," in *Biographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 6, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 1968).

maining theocratic state."[89] The School War between the Liberal and Catholic milieu had spread to Belgium's colony.

Against the background of the School War, Christian Social politicians, missionaries and church representatives saw the new state schools for Congolese children as a declaration of war. While the number of state schools had grown to sixty just one year after Buisseret took office, in accordance with the new allocation formula henceforth 45 percent of state subsidies went to both Catholic and state schools. Protestant schools received 10 percent. The Catholic pre-eminence in schooling was thus maintained: by 1960, 85 percent of Congolese pupils were still attending Catholic institutions, while 10 percent were enrolled in Protestant schools and just 5 percent in state schools.[90] Regardless of this, the Catholic missions balked at the termination of their decades-long monopoly in the colonial education system. The founding of a second university in Elisabethville under the aegis of the state reinforced their fears of having to do without state aid in future. Liberal colonial minister Buisseret also provoked the Catholic missions by breaking with his Christian Social predecessor's practice of granting them most of the public money from the *Fonds du Bien Être Indigène*. For years, the missions had used this to operate their extensive network of schools, hospitals and social centres.[91]

The School War in the Congo ended the consensus between the Belgian political parties on keeping metropolitan conflicts out of the colony, where representatives of the Liberal and Catholic milieu now looked for local allies.[92] They found them in the Congolese elite, for whom access to education had always been important and who were soon organized into various support groups.[93] Unsurprisingly, the presidents of the most important alumni associations, ADAPES and ASSANEF, expressed their support for a confessionally based education system to the colonial minister. But there were also representatives of the educated elite – increasingly disgruntled in view of the still meagre opportunities for further education in mission schools – who spoke in favour of the Liberal education reforms.

During the School War, the first "friendship associations" affiliated with the *Parti Libéral* and PSB were established in the Congo.[94] One of the members of the

89 Quoted in Boyle, "School Wars," 459.

90 Ibid., 464.

91 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 97 – 98.

92 On the founding of Congolese supporter groups for the Belgian parties, see Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 85 – 86.

93 Letter from ASSANEF to the governor general, 15 November 1950, KADOC/P/II/a/4/2/3/5.

94 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 168 – 170.

Liberal study circle established in Stanleyville was Patrice Lumumba, who participated actively in several associations in the city as an ever-busy spokesman for the vernacular elite.[95] Though Lumumba had only completed the first year of primary education at a Catholic school, subsequently continuing his educational career with the Methodists, as an illustrious representative of the African elite he published in the Catholic *Croix du Congo* and was a member of ADAPES. But after Lumumba, as president of the AES, had invited Colonial Minister Buisseret to his home during his first official tour of the Congo and later refused to sign a letter of protest against the school reforms penned by the Catholic missions, in the heated climate of the School War he gained a reputation as a supporter of the *Parti Libéral*.[96] In a letter addressed to the Colonial Ministry of 1956, however, Lumumba by no means presented himself as anti-clerical, but rather as a critic of the missionaries' predominance in the Congo: "I am a Catholic Christian, but also a loyal citizen. [...] If we want things to go well, we Congolese must be good friends with the Catholic missionaries. [...] Their representatives go to Belgium and sit on all the official commissions."[97] That same year, Lumumba was a member of a delegation of Congolese who made a tour of Belgium at Buisseret's invitation.[98] For Antoine-Roger Bolamba, editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, advocacy of the Liberal school reforms also paid dividends. In late 1956, the colonial minister made him a member of his cabinet for several months, as the first Congolese to hold such a post.

Through the emergence of parallel school systems, the Belgian political parties' gradual penetration of the colony, and the first activities of Christian and socialist trades unions,[99] colonial society began to undergo "pillarization."[100] The hostile camps' overtures to the Congolese elite opened up new opportunities for its members to exert an influence. Partly, though not solely, because expenditure on the education sector increased from 10 to 15 percent of the colonial budget from 1954 onwards,[101] the education-focused elite were the School War's only beneficiaries.

Ultimately, the most serious side-effect of the School War was that for the first time the permanence of colonial rule in the Belgian Congo was publicly

95 Lemarchand, *Political*, 182, 199.

96 See Tshonda and Verhaegen, *Lumumba: Jeunesse*, 226–228.

97 Lumumba letter of 17 January 1956 to the press attaché to the colonial minister, quoted in ibid., 227–228.

98 L. Zeilig, *Lumumba: Africa's Lost Leader* (London: Haus, 1998), 51.

99 On the beginnings of the trades unions, see Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 64.

100 See Piette, "Conscience Africaine," 55.

101 Boyle, "School Wars," 464.

questioned. It is no coincidence that it was the Catholic milieu that punched the first holes in the facade of an irreversible Belgian presence. Because the PSC found itself in opposition and continued to reject the idea of establishing a Congolese branch, Catholic intellectuals exercised their influence in the metropolitan and colonial public sphere. Jef Van Bilsen was a lecturer at the Institute for Overseas Studies, University of Antwerp. After several study trips through Africa, he was among those Catholic academics who debated the political future of colonial rule, and here he played a leading role,[102] publishing the "Thirty-Year Plan for the Political Emancipation of Belgian-Africa."[103] Van Bilsen's text had appeared in the *Dossiers de l'action sociale catholique* in February 1956, a monthly journal published by the MOC and close to the PSC. Simply by championing the policy goal of allowing the Congo political self-determination within 30 years, his text was seminal: prior to its publication no one had specified a date for independence. Though Van Bilsen favoured a close political association between the Congo and Belgium in future and referred to emancipation rather than independence, this text caused disgruntlement among conservative colonial experts and politicians. The Thirty-Year Plan set off a chain reaction in Léopoldville.[104]

First, against the background of the School War between the Liberal Colonial Ministry and the Catholic milieu, the "colonial unity of church and state"[105] began to crumble. In the *Revue Nouvelle*, the leading organ of progressive Catholic intellectuals in Belgium, the secretary general of the Bishopric of the Belgian Congo warned that the "cooperation so far carried out faithfully with the colonial government" might result in the church being held to account by Congolese "for its [the government's] tactical errors and failures." In June 1956, the bishops of the Belgian Congo also let it be known that the "inhabitants of every country have the right to take charge of their shared fate themselves."[106] Just one day later, a group of young Congolese graduates of the capital's Scheut mission schools, all of whom were members of a Catholic study circle founded in Léopoldville in 1952, published a riposte to Van Bilsen's plan. The so-called *Man-*

102 F. Reyntjens, "Van Bilsen," in *Biographie belge d'outre-mer*, vol. 9, ed. Académie Royale Science d'Outre-Mer (Brussels: Librairie Falk fils, 2015).

103 See Young, *Politics*, 52 – 54; Lemarchand, *Political*, 153 – 158.

104 M. Kalulambi Pongo, "Le manifeste 'Conscience africaine': genèse, influences et réactions," in *Le manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Élites congolaises et société coloniale. Regards croisés*, ed. N. Tousignant (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2009), 74 – 78.

105 Boyle, "School Wars," 452.

106 "Déclaration solennelle de l'Épiscopat congolais," quoted in Brassinne and Dumont, "Les autorités belges," 14.

ifesto was published in June 1956 in a print run of 10,000 copies. It was a special issue of the journal *Conscience Africaine*, the bulletin of the Catholic study circle, whose founding editors included Joseph Lobeya, a journalist at the *Croix du Congo*, which was closely linked with the missions, and Joseph Iléo, bookkeeper at the OCA, along with an employee of the General Government; their meetings were held at the mission of Abbot Joseph Malula.[107] The authors cleaved closely to Van Bilsen's blueprint and advocated a "Congolese nation, consisting of Africans and Europeans."[108] This, however, should take the form of a fully equal society based on mutual respect. In addition, they called for the ultimate goal of the Thirty-Year Plan to be "total emancipation" and, in the meantime, for Congolese to be allowed a greater say in the process of decolonization. Given the splits within the vernacular elite triggered by the School War, the authors urged all factions to make common cause as a "national popular movement."[109]

That the *Manifesto* could be read throughout the Belgian Congo was due to a Catholic network bridging metropole and colony, of which the Congolese authors writing in *Conscience Africaine* were also members: a professor at the Catholic University of Lovanium obtained provisional permission to publish from Jean Cordy, a cabinet member in the General Government and graduate of the Catholic University of Leuven. Before the text rolled off the Scheut mission's printing press, Jacques Meert had put the finishing touches to it, which brings us back full circle to Van Bilsen: Meert was the founder of the Congolese branch of the MOC, in whose Belgian monthly periodical Van Bilsen's Thirty-Year Plan had already appeared.[110]

Six weeks later, the *Association des Bakongo pour l'unification, la conservation et l'expansion de la langue kikongo* (ABAKO) responded in turn to this bold but moderate scheme put forward by elite Congolese active within the orbit of Léopoldville's Catholic milieu. The ABAKO's so-called *Counter-manifesto* moved away from the Thirty-Year Plan. Its demands were more radical and reflected the increasing impatience of sections of the vernacular elite in view of broken promises of reform: "The limits of our patience have already been ex-

107 On the interpretation and contextualization of the manifesto, see N. Tousignant, ed., *Le manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Elites congolaises et société coloniale. Regards croisés* (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2009). On the authors and members of the study circle, see Mutamba-Makombo, "Les auteurs."

108 "Manifeste," *Conscience Africaine Numéro Spécial* (July-August 1956): 1.

109 Ibid., 4.

110 On the manifesto authors' links with progressive Catholic Belgians in the Congo, see Mutamba-Makombo, "Les auteurs," 623.

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MANIFESTE

L'équipe de rédaction de « CONSCIENCE AFRICAINE » a consacré de nombreuses réunions à l'étude des difficiles problèmes de l'avenir du Congo.

Nous ne sommes qu'un petit groupe, mais nous pensons pouvoir parler au nom d'un grand nombre; parce que nous nous sommes volontairement limités à dégager et à formuler les aspirations et les sentiments de la majorité des Congolais qui réfléchissent.

Nous l'avons fait dans un esprit de sincérité et avec le désir de faire du travail constructif. Nous ne prétendons d'ailleurs à aucun monopole, ni de l'amour de notre pays, ni de la clairvoyance sur son avenir.

Le présent manifeste n'est qu'un point de départ. Nous le préciserons et le compléterons, ensemble avec ceux qui viendront nous rejoindre.

NOTRE VOCATION NATIONALE

Dans l'histoire du Congo, les 80 dernières années ont été plus importantes que les millénaires qui ont précédé. Les 30 années qui viennent seront décisives pour notre avenir. Il serait vain de vouloir baser notre sentiment national sur l'attachement à un passé révolu. C'est vers l'avenir que se tournent nos regards.

Nous croyons que le Congo est appelé à devenir, au centre du continent africain, une grande nation.

Notre vocation nationale : travailler à édifier, au cœur de l'Afrique, une société nouvelle, prospère et heureuse, sur les fondements d'une société ancienne — la société clanique — fortement ébranlée par une évolution trop rapide, et qui cherche son nouvel équilibre.

Cet équilibre nouveau, nous ne pouvons le trouver que dans la synthèse de notre caractère et de notre tempérament africains avec les richesses foncières de la civilisation occidentale.

Cette synthèse, personne ne peut la réaliser en lieu et place des Congolais, avec l'aide fraternelle des Occidentaux qui vivent au Congo.

Pour que l'on puisse parler d'une nation congolaise, composée d'Africains et d'Européens, il faut que tous soient animés du désir de servir le Congo. Nous avons le droit de demander aux Européens qui partagent notre vie nationale, d'être avant tout des citoyens congolais; c'est à dire de ne pas poursuivre uniquement le bien de la communauté belge au Congo et leurs intérêts personnels; mais de rechercher, ensemble avec nous, le bien de la grande communauté congolaise.

UNITÉ DANS LA DIVERSITÉ

Un principe est pour nous essentiel : **la couleur de la peau ne confère aucun privilège.** En dehors de ce principe, l'union est impossible.

Mais, égalité foncière ne signifie pas identité. **Nous voulons être des Congolais civilisés, non des « Européens à peau noire »** ... Nous comprenons également que les Européens désirent garder leur propre manière de vivre.

Maintenir des privilèges à l'un des deux groupes, serait source de conflits. Ne pas reconnaître leurs caractères propres et vouloir les uniformiser, créerait également des tensions dangereuses. Il faut admettre, dans un esprit de compréhension, qu'une différence n'est pas nécessairement une infériorité ou une supériorité.

Nous rejetons avec véhémence, le principe : « Egaux, mais séparés »... Il nous blesse profondément... Les milieux européens et africains doivent se compénétrer. Des contacts humains sur pied d'égalité doivent s'établir; non seulement sur le plan individuel; non seulement dans des associations créées spécialement pour favoriser ces contacts; mais également dans toutes les relations : familiales, professionnelles et sociales.

UNE TACHE EXALTANTE A POURSUIVRE

A partir de l'action civilisatrice de la Belgique au Congo, se développe **une civilisation nouvelle** qui sera la nôtre. Déjà les éléments principaux de la civilisation occidentale pénètrent de plus en plus profondément au Congo. L'enseignement primaire atteint les masses, tandis qu'une élite intellectuelle fait des études universitaires. Les progrès incessants de la science et de la technique luttent contre la maladie et la misère et jettent les bases d'une prospérité croissante. La religion chrétienne nous enseigne le sens profond de la vie, la dignité éminente de la personnalité humaine et la fraternité de tous les hommes.

Mais nous ne sommes encore qu'à mi-chemin... **Nous voulons une civilisation complète.** Un nombre croissant de Congo-

Fig. 14: Cover of the special issue of *Conscience Africaine*, July-August 1956.

ceeded. The time has now come to grant us emancipation, rather than delaying it for another thirty years."[111]

The ABAKO text was also the counter-manifesto of an ethnically defined grouping. The ABAKO, much like the authors writing for the *Conscience Africaine*, protested against the Belgian parties' expansion to the colony and called for the establishment of Congolese parties. But rather than a supra-ethnic party with a national presence, what the ABAKO had in mind was an ethnic unity party for

111 ABAKO Manifesto, reprinted in B. Verhaegen, *L'ABAKO (Association des Bakongo) 1950 – 1960, documents* (Brussels: Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 1962), 41.

the region of Bas-Congo.[112] The ABAKO, founded in Léopoldville in 1950, claimed to represent the Bakongo of the capital, who made up the majority of its population and, as the inhabitants of the surrounding areas, had come under the influence of the Jesuits.[113] The initiator of the association, a former pupil of the Jesuit seminary in Kisantu, had been encouraged by Joseph Van Wing to campaign for the preservation of the culture and language of the Bakongo. Van Wing, who had not only proselytized to the Bakongo but had also ascribed a group identity to them through his anthropological research, observed with concern the growing tendency for Bakongo in Léopoldville to speak Lingala. The rapid growth of Léopoldville after the war was based on a massive influx of people from the regions east of the city, from which this *lingua franca* had spread throughout the colony.[114] Furthermore, the incomers had migrated from areas served by the Scheut missionary order, which was also responsible for Léopoldville. The Scheutists thus welcomed graduates from their mission schools in the colony's interior and integrated the educated elites among them into the order's networks in the capital. Representatives of the Bangala, Baluba and Mongo, then, were often active in elite institutions such as the *Croix du Congo* or the ADAPES, occupied important positions in the professional world and increasingly outdid the Bakongo, who had been educated by Jesuits.[115] The rivalry between the Catholic missionary orders laid for the foundation for an ethnic rivalry between the capital's *évolués*. That the ABAKO's founding manifesto began with the demand that "we, as the core of the Congolese elite, [must] improve our knowledge of our native language" and "unite all Bakongo in the capital," was an implicit challenge to other groups of Congolese.[116] In the editors of *Conscience Africaine*, the ABAKO association president Joseph Kasa-Vubu, who had completed part of his education with the Scheutists and had been secretary general of the ADAPES alumni association shortly before, saw neither association colleagues nor representatives of the aspiring *évolués*, though he himself had a *carte du mérite civique* and had been immatriculated.[117] For him, the *Manifesto* was essentially the work of Baluba and Bangala newcomers, who were given preferential treatment by the Scheut missions.[118]

112 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 259.
113 Lafontaine, *City Politics*, 40 – 41.
114 Verhaegen, *L'ABAKO (Association des Bakongo)*, 178.
115 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 158.
116 "Vers l'unification de la langue kikongo manifeste d'un groupe de bakongo" (1950), reprinted in Verhaegen, *L'ABAKO (Association des Bakongo)*, 10 – 13.
117 Artigue, *Qui sont*, 132 – 133.
118 Verhaegen, *L'ABAKO (Association des Bakongo)*, 178.

The ABAKO was only the best known of the ethnically and regionally defined associations that had developed over the course of the 1950s.[119] These associations elicited a highly favourable response from the colonial administration. It not only welcomed the self-help character of many of these bodies, which was consonant with the policies of the Liberal colonial minister. The administration also discerned in them the Congolese elite's turn, as incessantly called for, towards the masses. The associations were thoroughly committed to the moral, social and cultural development of their members – but it was specific groups rather than the masses to whom they addressed themselves. In 1956, Léopoldville alone was already home to 137 regionally or ethnically oriented associations, which equated with a doubling within two years. That the number of supra-ethnic associations dwindled at the same time is paradigmatic of the slow shift in the colonial state's elite-making policy away from the postulate of assimilation.[120]

Meanwhile, in a speech before the *Conseil de Gouvernement* in 1955, Governor General Pétillon had modified his notion of a Belgian-Congolese Community: now the priority was to create an association of all Congolese and Europeans. He considered this more realistic than the integration, as previously envisaged, of a small number of "assimilated" into the European community.[121] On this view, the Congolese must remain Congolese and the Belgians Belgian. The place of the vernacular elite in the world of tomorrow was less clear than ever in this vision. The Colonial Ministry's sudden tendency to present the *évolués* as leaders of regional or ethnic associations thus points to a strategic reorientation. Yet what the *évolués* beheld when they turned their attention to Congolese traditions and affiliations was merely the ethnic hotchpotch generated since the 1880s by the mission schools' language and identity policies and the divide-and-rule principle so central to colonial policy. The politicized vernacular elite, who suffered from the refusal to recognize them and from their lack of equality with Europeans on a daily basis, no longer saw themselves as the elite imagined by evangelizing missionaries or as the elite subjects envisaged by the colonial state. Henceforth, they staged themselves as an elite of regionally, linguistically or ethnically defined groupings, whose members could be mobilized at future elections. The *évolués* used the space opened up by the contradictions of the Belgian ideology of adaptation, which demanded assimilation of the Congolese elite

119 Verhaegen, *Les premiers manifestes politiques*, 60.
120 Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises," 391.
121 Quoted in Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 41–42.

while lamenting their cultural deracination. Those styled "detribalized" since the inter-war period reinvented themselves: as the "retribalized."

The ethnicization of the Belgian Congo in the mid-1950s should by no means be interpreted as a case of regression to an "archaic" tribal mindset. In fact, this phenomenon also affected the Belgians resident in the Congo. The transfer of the School War to the colony had been facilitated by the increased immigration of Belgians, among whom there were both Flemings and Walloons as well as partisans of the Catholic, socialist and liberal milieus.[122] The struggles of the metropole, which they had brought along with them in their cultural baggage, led to tensions within the Belgian colonial population. In Belgium, the School War had exacerbated the country's regional and linguistic division, which dovetailed with affiliations to political milieus.[123] In overwhelmingly rural Flanders, where society was dominated by the Catholic pillar, the vast majority of schools were confessional. It is no coincidence that the region was the source of just under 80 percent of Belgian missionaries.[124] In the more heavily industrialized Wallonia, on the other hand, home to powerful socialist organizations, it was state schools that predominated. The enduring pre-eminence of the Francophone elites and the French language in the metropole, meanwhile, also made itself felt in the colony. Half of colonial officials were from Flanders. Yet they mostly held subordinate posts, and just one in ten Belgian pupils in the colony was taught in Dutch.[125] The debate, which had intensified since the mid-1950s, on the introduction of Flemish as the second official European language in the Congo, was closely bound up with the concurrent invigoration of the Flemish movement in Belgium.[126]

The vision of a Belgian-Congolese Community, then, lost much of its appeal partly, though not solely, because of Belgians' racist reservations about assimilated Congolese and the still limited legal assimilation of the vernacular elite. This shift was also a result of the social tensions and sectionalism of the metropolitan society, which surfaced clearly for the first time in the colony as well. Hence, while in the mid-1950s "the Belgians" in the Congo fragmented into clerical and anti-clerical groups, which often went hand in hand with linguistic communities and political orientations, "the Congolese" too split into ethnic and regional groupings. The Belgian-Congolese Community was supposed to bring together two groups that were both increasingly fractured by centrifugal social

122 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 77 and 94.
123 Dujardin and Dumoulin, *L'union*, 77.
124 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 78.
125 Ibid.
126 See Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 62; Lemarchand, *Political*, 150 – 153.

forces. Yet former Christian Social colonial minister Pierre Wigny still looked through rose-tinted spectacles, viewing the coexistence of Walloons and Flemings in Belgium as evidence that a Community of Belgians and Congolese was an achievable goal. Those responsible for Belgian colonial policy continued to believe that the model of the organized channelling of political, social and linguistic divisions – which had by now failed in the metropole – could be applied to the Belgian Congo.[127] In the wake of the politicization of an even more complex Congolese population, this was to prove a fateful misconception. In Belgium two languages dominated. In the Congo, which was fifty-seven times larger, there were two hundred.

127 On the Belgian state's approach to the pluralism of its population, see Conway, *Sorrows*, 6.

Centrifugal forces of decolonization (1957–1960)

Urban sites of political ethnicization

At the end of the Second World War, the architects of Belgian colonial policy asserted that decolonization would occur on the centenary of the founding of the Congo Free State, in 1985.[1] But their belief that they could determine the pace of political development within the Belgian empire turned out to be a fantasy of control detached from realities on the ground.[2]

After the School War, several conflicts began to come to a head at once: the dispute between Brussels and Léopoldville on how much political participation colonial subjects ought to be granted and how far imperial integration ought to extend; ethnic and regional antagonisms within the vernacular population and increasing splits among the *évolués*; and discord among Congolese party leaders on the timing of independence, relations with Belgium and the territory of the future state. In the three years between 1957 and 1960, centrifugal forces of decolonization came into effect in the Belgian Congo. While Patrice Lumumba was to champion the unity of the Congo, most members of his generation believed the colony ought to be split into smaller territorial units. Above all, though, a vernacular elite that had been so close to the colonial state was transformed into an anti-colonial elite that rapidly assumed the leadership of the independent Congo.

If we are to interpret the Belgian Congo's abrupt politicization, the dizzying pace of its transformation into an independent country and its postcolonial crises as consequences of late colonial elite-making policy, we must first examine how Belgian colonial policy responded to the political manifestos produced by Léopoldville's vernacular elite. While decolonization forged ahead in many parts of Africa, the Belgian colonial government persisted in its efforts to keep the new realities in check through a series of graduated reforms. Once again, the goal was to prevent the overthrow of the colonial system through targeted tweaks, by granting Congolese greater opportunities for political participation, enhancing their freedom of expression and extending their freedom of assem-

1 This was the forecast made by Georges Caprasse in an issue of *Courrier d'Afrique* of 1946. See J. Van Bilsen, *Vers l'indépendance du Congo et du Ruanda-Urundi* (Kinshasa: Presses universitaires du Zaïre, 1977).

2 Frederick Cooper comes to a similar conclusion in light of attempts at political reform in French and British Africa after 1945; Cooper, *Africa*, 38.

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bly.[3] But frictions arose between Liberal colonial minister Auguste Buisseret and Governor General Léon Pétillon, who requested that Brussels put forward a detailed vision of the Belgian Congo's political future. Pétillon's urgent calls for a close political association between metropole and colony, as supported by the Belgian crown, was rejected by the Socialist-Liberal government.[4] Instead it prioritized implementation of the long-shelved plan to gradually allow Congolese to assume political responsibilities.

Since 1948, expert commissions in Léopoldville and Brussels had discussed drafts of the *statut des villes*, which was intended to give Congolese in towns and cities their first experience of political participation. This focus on urban areas reflected a Belgian conception of how political maturity develops. In Belgium too, forms of political participation had first existed at the municipal level, before being gradually extended to other territorial units.[5] The *statut des villes*, finally enacted in March 1957, was more far-reaching and less paternalistic than earlier plans, which had envisaged mayors appointed by the provincial governors and separately administered Congolese and European districts.[6] Instead, given the existence of an increasingly politicized vernacular elite, the colonial government adopted a system of "consultations," which enabled all male residents of twenty-five and above to vote in elections to *conseils communaux*, which in turn appointed a mayor. Initially these elections were restricted to Léopoldville, Elisabethville and Jadotville.

To the Congolese elite, this reform seemed grossly outdated. First, the news had spread that Kwame Nkrumah had become the first African prime minister of an independent state south of the Sahara in March 1957. The fact that the *statut des villes* was directly inspired by British post-war reforms to the local administration in east Africa, which were significantly more restrictive than those in Ghana, reinforced the impression of a measure out of keeping with the times.[7] Second, around the same time the first elections had taken place in neighbouring Brazzaville in the wake of the *loi-cadre* reform, through which the French empire shifted away from its policy of integration. Paris now transferred administrative and financial powers to the various French overseas territories, including areas such as social policy, which had come to cost France dear due to African demands for equality. Yet this reform still sent a major political signal: the inhab-

3 Correspondence between the colonial minister and governor general, 28 November 1956, AA/PPA/3478.

4 Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 23.

5 Young, *Politics*, 40 – 41.

6 On the following remarks, see ibid., 112 – 117.

7 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 235.

itants of the various territories could choose their own government based on universal suffrage and these administrations enjoyed broad autonomy despite the presence of a French governor holding ultimate authority.[8]

The condemnation of the *statut des villes* as a restricted form of democratic participation by the ABAKO, which had been critical of colonialism in its "Counter-manifesto," was as predictable as its electoral success in Léopoldville. Under the leadership of Joseph Kasa-Vubu, a former seminarian now employed as a bookkeeper in the General Government's finance department, the ABAKO cultural association had detached itself from the influence of the Belgian Jesuits and transformed itself into a political advocacy group.[9] Anticipating the reforms ushering in political participation in the cities, originally announced in 1952, Kasa-Vubu advanced the Bakongo's claim to leadership; this group made up 60 percent of Léopoldville's heterogenous population. The ABAKO thus tried to influence, to the benefit of the Bakongo, appointments to posts within the administrative apparatus of the Congolese city districts. In the early 1950s, this spurred the elite representatives of other regional and linguistic backgrounds to set themselves up as the spokesmen of numerically important population groups.

Led by a holder of the *carte du mérite civique*, the group of incomers from upstream regions, referred to as Bangala, were organized into the Liboke Lya Bangala. The *Fédération de l' Équateur et du lac Léopold II* (FEDEQUALAC), meanwhile, united several associations of the Mongo. Its members included Antoine-Roger Bolamba, editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, Paul Bolya, a trainer at a vocational school for doctor's assistants, and Joseph Iléo, co-author of the Manifesto published in *Conscience Africaine*.[10] In Léopoldville, the language of the Mongo functioned as a means of distinction *vis-à-vis* the Bangala, though they were often identified with the latter because both came from the region east of the capital and had been educated by Scheut missionaries. This state of affairs facilitated strategic alliances between the Bangala and Mongo against the Bakongo, whose elite representatives, organized in the ABAKO, had been socialized in Jesuit schools. The founding of the regionally defined *Fédération Kwango-Kwiloise* (FEDEKWALEO) was initiated by Gaston Midu; like ABAKO president Kasa-Vubu, he had been granted immatriculation. The *Fédération Kasaienne*, an alliance of thirty associations of immigrants from the Kasai region, was headed by Eugéne Kabamba, an office assistant working for the General

8 On the *loi-cadre* law, see Cooper, *Africa*, 77–81.
9 Markowitz, *Cross and Sword*, 150.
10 Young, *Politics*, 249.

Government and former president of both the ASSANEF and the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agréments*.

In comparison with the ABAKO, which was supported by a spatially proximate and linguistically homogenous population, these regional assemblages were more heterogeneous and thus more fragile. This made itself felt at elections. In December 1957, 8 out of 10 mayoralties and 130 out of 170 council seats in Léopoldville went to members of the ABAKO. This result changed the associational landscape in the capital once again, prompting Jean Bolikango, who had taught many local members of the elite during his 20 years of teaching at the Scheut mission school of St. Joseph and was chair of influential associations such as the ADAPES, to create the *Interfédérale*. This sought to unite the various regional and ethnic federations to fight future election campaigns, though ultimately unsuccessfully.

Fig. 15: Jean Bolikango, president of the *Fédération des Bangala*, prior to a meeting of this organization in Léopoldville, 1959.

The *statut des villes* exacerbated the conflict within the capital's *évolué* elite, whose leading figures increasingly engaged in power struggles with one another as the leaders of ethnically and regionally based communities. Educated Congo-

lese were still active in supra-ethnic bodies, such as alumni associations, Belgian-Congolese associations, debating clubs and the recently founded political study circles and trades unions. But the communitization of groups of origin held out a better prospect of success at the local government elections. The micro-cosmos of Léopoldville reflected the heterogeneity of the Congolese population like no other city and was viewed as a laboratory for a colony-wide vernacular elite. It was here that the multifaceted, highly complex and shifting battle lines and alliances that were to shape the frenetic process of decolonization in the Belgian Congo began to emerge. Ironically, it was Jesuit missionary Joseph Van Wing who first drew attention to the fact that this new "ethnonationalism"[11] in the cities would put the future unity of the Congo at risk. He himself had actively supported the establishment of the ABAKO as a means of preserving the Bakongo culture that he had constructed in his anthropological writings. He thus helped propel the "retribalization" of the Congolese elite.[12]

Van Wing's concerns were justified. The local government elections in the southern province of Katanga were subject to similar centrifugal processes as in Léopoldville. Crucially, the *statut des villes* in the Belgian Congo was introduced in a depoliticized landscape devoid of political parties, while the vernacular population had been shielded from political participation and ideological debates. In Elisabethville and Jadotville too, therefore, those who came out on top politically were the elite representatives of associations that emphasized the regional, linguistic or ethnic commonalities shared by majorities within the local population.[13] In contrast to Léopoldville, where the Bakongo were numerically dominant, elections in Elisabethville and Jadotville were won by representatives of the Baluba, who had immigrated from Kasai province on a massive scale in the wake of industrialization. They took three out of the four mayoralties, stoking latent tensions with long-established groups. That the Baluba already occupied many coveted posts in administrative offices was a result of the education they had received from Scheut missionaries in Kasai province.[14] It was thus from among the Baluba that most of the educated elite of Katanga were recruited; their representatives were not only the first elected mayors but had also made up the majority of *évolué* association chairmen.[15]

When the *statut des villes* was extended to four other urban settlements in several provinces in late 1958, the elections in Coquilhatville and Luluabourg

11 See Lemarchand, *Political*, 192–197.
12 Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises à Léopoldville," 395.
13 Lemarchand, *Political*, 193.
14 Ibid., 97; Jewsiewicki, "Formation," 329.
15 Dibwe dia Mwembu, "La formation," 128.

again served as catalysts for ethnically construed antagonisms between two population groups. In Stanleyville, whose population stood out for its heterogeneity, as well as in the ethnically homogenous Bukavu, by contrast, the voting passed off peacefully.

The clear election losers were the interest groups inspired by Belgian political parties, which built on the study circles that emerged during the School War. The Elisabethville-based *Union Congolaise*, which was established by famous lawyer Antoine Rubbens and had a progressive Catholic and supra-tribal orientation, was reduced to an insignificant force. The *Action Socialiste*, based in Léopoldville, which was affiliated with the PSB and temporarily counted the first Congolese trades unionists among its members, shared the same fate. Not only did the vernacular elite consider the European-led political parties a form of ongoing paternalism, but the ideological nuances of their imported party programmes mobilized few voters. When the Belgian parties finally discovered the Congo, any interest in them had already evaporated.

Furthermore, leaving aside the small number of settlements in which the *statut des villes* was introduced, the Congolese elite's opportunities for political participation were extended through increased representation on the councils serving the colonial administration.[16] The so-called *Conseils de Territoire* were initially established at the local level. Europeans, however, remained the dominant force on these councils. The reforms to political participation thus by no means assuaged the vernacular elite, instead bringing home to them the limits of their political participation and Europeans' enduring hegemony. Elite Africans viewed the Belgian-Congolese Community, which was still being propagated, as little more than the "community [that exists] between a rider and his horse."[17] Rather than a tool for integrating the Congolese elite into the new colonial political apparatus, the mayoralties thus became a platform for anti-colonial agitators. ABAKO president Joseph Kasa-Vubu was less interested in local government politics in Léopoldville than in achieving independence as rapidly as possible. In his inaugural speech as mayor, he called for general elections and internal autonomy.[18]

16 On this reform, see Brausch, *Belgian Administration*, 48 – 52.

17 Young, *Politics*, 57.

18 Ibid., 16 – 17; on the politicization of the ABAKO, see Lemarchand, *Political*, 184 – 190.

Dissonant Congolese voices and *évolués* in crisis

Ultimately, the rise of the ethnic paradigm and growing anti-colonial sentiment in the urban settlements also discredited the colonial state's elite-making policy. That this inevitably signified a crisis for the *évolué* concept is evident if we examine the colonial public sphere, where the limits of freedom of expression increasingly began to shift.[19]

As an expression of the Belgian-Congolese Community, as early as 1956 daily newspapers that were mainly read by the colony's Europeans had increasingly begun to attract Congolese readers as well. In the case of the liberally inclined *Avenir*, based in Léopoldville, a young editorial team, including later autocrat Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, began to report on *Actualités Africaines* in an eponymous section of the newspaper. Three of these editors, including the younger brother of Thomas Kanza, who had received his academic education in Belgium, established an independent newspaper named *Congo* in 1957 with logistical support from the publisher of *Avenir*. "The first Congolese weekly newspaper by Africans"[20] was openly critical of colonialism. The articles in the *Voix du nègres* section, a conscious allusion to the *Voix du Congolais*, were attributed to the pseudonymous Mwena-Ditu, a "non-*évolué* without a voice."[21] They criticized the injustices of the colonial system and also took to task those members of the Congolese elite eager to adapt and close to the colonial state. They thus mocked Antoine-Roger Bolamba, long-standing editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, because he was allowed to give a talk of just ten minutes at the 1957 *Congrès international des écrivains et journalistes noirs* in Paris. They also attacked Bolamba for his eight-month stint working at the Colonial Ministry in Brussels under the Liberal Buisseret, which they presented as a case of paternalistic fa-

19 On decolonization and media in Africa, see Chomentowski, Gabrielle, and Leyris Thomas, "Médias et décolonisations en Afrique francophone. Une histoire à écrire," *Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique* 1 (2021): 1–15. For a case study on journalism and political struggles in the Ivory Coast, see Fierens, Marie, "Journalisme et politique en Côte d'Ivoire (années 1930–1964). Itinéraires croisés d'une profession," *Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique* 1 (2021). On newspapers and late-colonial politicization in Kenya, see Frederiksen, Bodil F., "'The Present Battle is the Brain Battle': Writing and Publishing a Kikuyu Newspaper in the Pre-Mau Mau Period in Kenya," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

20 To cite this periodical's subheading. See V. Kanza, "Congo, Journal interdit. Philippe Kanza et Mathieu Ekatou ou la genèse d'une presse congolaise libre et indépendante," in *Aspects de la culture à l'époque coloniale en Afrique centrale. Presse. Archives*, eds. M. Quaghebeur, and Bibiane Tshibola Kalengayi (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

21 Ibid., 165.

vouritism.[22] After just three months, the General Government revoked the provocative periodical's license.

Shortly before, however, Jean Labrique, a retired press attaché to the governor general, had managed to poach a few editors from *Congo* in order to establish another progressive newspaper. *Quinze* was published under the auspices of the recently established *Agence belgo-congolaise de presse et de documentation* and was produced at the liberal *Avenir*'s printing works. This so-called "illustrated African weekly," much like the *Congo*, provided information on the lives of the first few Congolese who had made the trip to the metropole as musicians, students, and as representatives of associations and trades unions initiated by Belgians. This periodical also published articles by anti-colonial intellectuals such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Georges Balandier. *Quinze* informed its readers about the state of decolonization in Africa. It reported on the racist rule of "whites" in South Africa, similar developments in Rhodesia and Kenya, the dictatorial features of Portuguese Africa and the situation of independent Ghana and other territories in the British empire. Light was shed on the political consequences of the French *loi-cadre* law and on the first democratic developments in the towns and cities of the Belgian Congo.[23] This newspaper was an expression of the fact that after the School War the *cordon sanitaire*, through which Belgian colonial policy had for decades sealed the Congo off from external influences, had finally been breached.

Last but not least, *Quinze* carried reports on Léopoldville's vibrant cultural life, the latest hits and dances in the bars and night clubs, the winners of beauty contests and their cutting-edge fashion. It provides us with a slice of the Congolese lifeworld, which had previously appeared within the colonial public sphere solely as a negative foil for normative elite discourse. The *femmes libres*, frowned upon as uncivilized in the *Voix du Congolais*, were now presented to readers as successful businesswomen. As a fashion designer, divorced seamstress Victorine N'Djoli – who went down in history as the first female Congolese with a driving license –[24] now earned as much as an office worker in the administration.[25] *Quinze* also makes it clear that the young and sometimes better educated urban dwellers were turning away from the moral discourse of the "perfected black." They were not interested in the fragile respectibility of the official Congolese elite, which, in the form of *évolué* status, entailed more humiliation

22 N. n., "Retour au pays," *Congo* (4 May 1957): 6.
23 C. Perken, "Où va l'Afrique noire?," *Quinze*, no. 5 (August 1957).
24 J. Davier, "Femme au volant," *Voix du Congolais* no. 108 (March 1955).
25 J.-J. Kandé, "Elle donne le ton à la mode," *Quinze* (July 1957).

than privileges.[26] Reading between the lines, what we find is a generational conflict in which the old and new educated vernacular elites of Léopoldville were at odds over behavioural norms and moral values.[27]

But the colonial government shut down *Quinze* too after a few issues. The trigger was an article on *marijuana* consumption in Congolese urban districts,[28] which was viewed as likely to incite readers to try the drug themselves. Its author, Jean-Jacques Kandé, a graduate of the capital's St. Anne's Scheut mission school, ended up in prison without a trial and with no relaxation of the conditions of detention. As a typical representative of the young educated Congolese elite, he had opted not to apply for the *carte du mérite civique* or immatriculation, which would have ensured better treatment.[29] The editor of *Quinze*, Jean Labrique, was deported.[30] The colonial government continued to define the limits of freedom of expression in an arbitrary way. The colonial state remained a repressive one.

Against the background of the new – if often short-lived – periodicals, the established press too sought to reposition itself. The *Voix du Congolais*, which had started life as the voice of the Congolese elite and medium of colonial development, relied on the familiar mix of cautious criticism within the colonial system and educational treatises on the cultural perfecting of the *évolués*. Its authors continued to champion bourgeois cultural paradigms and gender orders. While for the first time the Congolese man was now being addressed as a political being through reports on elected mayors and political parties, the *Voix du Congolais* also anticipated the further education for women that was launched in the mid-1950s. Its covers, now optically enhanced with a glossy finish, sometimes featured a group of ladies engrossed in reading.[31] Editorials extolled the "African woman in the modern world," flanked by images of working Congolese

26 Interviewees of this generation seem to have been quite content to be viewed as "false" *évolués* by older members of the African elite, as long as they were paid "properly" and could enjoy themselves "properly." See interview with Jean Lema, Kinshasa, 13 August 2010; interview with Camille Auguste Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010.

27 In the Gold Coast, the different elite generations in the capital, Accra, carried on similar debates, which again emphasized the culture of entertainment. See J. K. Prais, "Representing an African City and Urban Elite. The Nightclubs, Dance Halls, and Red Light District of Interwar Accra," in *The Arts of Citizenship in African Cities*, eds. R. Fredericks and M. Diouf (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

28 J.-J. Kandé, "Fumeries de chanvres," *Quinze* (16 August 1957).

29 N.n., "Jean-Jacques Kandé en prison," *Congo* (23 August 1957): 2.

30 Young, *Politics*, 55.

31 *Voix du Congolais* no. 143 (February 1958).

females.[32] By contrast, its authors condemned the fashion shows and beauty contests celebrated in periodicals such as *Quinze* or *Congo* as detrimental to the "civilizing of the woman."[33] When it comes to the appeal of the *Voix du Congolais* as a forum for the vernacular elite's demands, its star had waned in view of the thin pickings from the status debate, the limits of the Belgian-Congolese Community and the sluggish implementation of promised reforms. The typical articles on cultural assimilation increasingly jostled with texts that did not equate civilizing with abandoning one's own traditions but instead championed a middle way. The discovery of the political mobilizing power of ethnic and regional communitization prompted the Congolese elite to write reports on the groups of origin they were now openly representing. The texts produced by editor-in-chief Antoine-Roger Bolamba, who had returned from Brussels by this point, no longer dealt with the perfecting of *évolués*, but instead with the history of the Mongo.[34]

That the supra-ethnic concept of the *évolué* had lost much of its binding power and promise was discussed openly in new rival publications. Established authors such as Antoine-Marie Mobé now submitted their articles, for example, to *Conscience Africaine*, if they were not published in the *Voix du Congolais* or *Croix du Congo* due to their "excessively" harsh criticisms.[35] Antoine Omari, whose articles in the *Voix du Congolais* had championed the reform of immatriculation, lamented the "fate of the assimilated" in *Avenir*'s *Actualités Africaines* section. He contended that while *évolué* status endowed them with the same obligations as Europeans, they were not granted the same privileges, as evident in persistent legal forms of discrimination such as unequal pay. Omari referred to status-holders as the "sacrificed generation."[36] He also defended the *évolués*, and thus himself as well, against the accusation that they had "discarded all Bantu customs in favour of a preposterous Europeanization."[37] Omari affirmed that, despite their adaptation to the European way of life, the *évolués* felt just as at home in the traditional milieu.

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32 M. Colin, "La femme africaine face au monde moderne," *Voix du Congolais* no. 145 (April 1957).

33 Ibid.

34 A.-R. Bolamba, "Vie, coutume et mœurs des Mongo de l' Équateur," *Voix du Congolais* no. 145 (April 1958).

35 In February 1957, for example, Antoine-Marie Mobé placed a critical article on poor conditions of travel in *Conscience Africaine* that the *Voix du Congolais* and *Croix du Congo* had previously rejected. See correspondence between *Croix du Congo* and Mobé, January 1957, private archive Antoine-Marie Mobé.

36 A. Omari, "Le sort des assimilés," *Actualités Africaines* (10 January 1957).

37 A. Omari, "Immatriculés ou Fantaisistes?," *Actualités Africaines* (27 June 1952).

But it was not just against the background of the public revalorization of vernacular traditions that the *évolué* elite came under pressure to justify itself.[38] The aforementioned young generation of educated Congolese in Léopoldville, who were familiar with the limits of legal equality and the undignified application process from their own experience, had nothing but contempt for this rocky road of social ascent within colonial society. "*Carte du mérite syphilis*,"[39] they scoffed. Particularly in the ever more anti-colonial elite milieu of Léopoldville, the flagging interest in *évolué* status was evident in numerical terms. By 1953, 146 *cartes du mérite civique* had been issued there, one in four of the total number for the Belgian Congo.[40] By 1958, just 104 further card-holders were added to this figure, only 16 percent of the total number of cards issued. A mere 23 individuals applied in the capital in 1958. A similar picture emerges in the case of immatriculation, granted to 44 individuals in the capital between 1952 and 1954. Four years later, the number had grown to no more than 100 in total. In late 1954, two out of three immatriculated were residents of the capital, but this share had dwindled to 46 percent by the end of 1958. The growing critique of the colonial system even spread to its linchpins. It dawned on the Congolese elite, who had put their labour power at the service of the colonial state and complied with the provisions of the assimilation policy, that future elections could not be won with the *évolué* concept.

The *Croix du Congo*, the competitor of the *Voix du Congolais* published by Scheut missionaries, also tried to keep pace with political and social change. The newspaper's "Africanization" had been initiated as early as 1955 with the appointment of Jean Lobeya, one of the founding members of *Conscience Africaine*, as its first Congolese editor-in-chief. The radical rupture, however, came in January 1958, when the publication was renamed *Horizons* and a young generation of editors took the helm. Through the input of journalists such as 27-year-old August Camille Mwissa-Camus,[41] who, like the authors of *Quinze* and *Congo*, had attended the Scheut mission schools in Léopoldville, a more combative tone took hold. This periodical continued to view itself as "religious" and "Christi-

38 Ibid.

39 Interview with André Matingu, Kinshasa, 7 September 2010.

40 The following calculations are based on annual statistics produced by the colonial administration: Chambre des représentants, *Rapport 1954*, 103; Chambre des représentants, 1959, 104.

41 By integrating the element "Camus" into his name the author expressed his admiration for writer Albert Camus; interview with Camille Auguste Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010. On his career, see M. Fierens, "Reporting on the Independance of Belgian Congo: Mwissa Camus, the Dean of Congolese Journalists," *African Journalism Studies* 37 (2016).

an,"[42] but largely broke away from its original evangelizing mission and committed itself to political emancipation – as a "true fighter for the defence of freedom, truth and justice."[43] This reorientation had the blessing of its publishers. The missionaries involved in Catholic Action were not afraid to critique colonialism. The Catholic Church had learned from the School War that the colonial system was neither a prerequisite for, nor guarantee of, successful missionary work.[44] What the Scheutists of Léopoldville wanted was for *Horizons* to plug the gaps left by the ban on *Quinze* and *Congo*.[45] The missionaries' diversification of their media offerings in an attempt to advance their evangelizing mission in new ways did not entail changes in the cultural models they propagated – urban entertainment culture, for example, was virtually absent from the newspaper. The Catholic associational and periodical landscape continued to champion monogamous marriage and bourgeois gender orders. The fact that women authors now published articles here and there in *Horizons* reflected the improved educational opportunities for women, which applied in Catholic schools as elsewhere. Articles on the *Joys of a Mother within the Family*, however, were an indication that even this progressive publication saw the life of the housewife as the ideal state for women. While it welcomed political independence, it was not interested in wives gaining independence from their husbands.[46]

Notions of the "Christian household" continued to be propagated by media associated with Catholic Action. One example of this is the periodical *Nos familles congolaises*, produced by the *Mouvement Familial* association, a body founded in 1954 as part of the MOC. In Léopoldville, however, no more than 300 African families joined this organization, which was run by Belgian (women) social workers. In contrast to the huge increase in this mass organization's membership in post-war Belgium, in the colony it reached only the educated and church-loyal elite. Léopoldville was characterized by high unemployment and a constant flow of economic migrants, so it was only the higher-earning elite that was in a financial position to afford the propagandized ideal of the bourgeois nuclear family with its patriarchal gender order. While the new gender re-

42 Letter from Van Hamme to the governor general, 18 December 1957, KADOC/G/XIII/b/4/2.
43 C. Mwissa, "Horizons," *Croix du Congo* (29 December 1957).
44 On the reorientation of the *Croix du Congo*, see KADOC/G/XIII/b/4/2.
45 Internal document of 21 August 1957, KADOC/G/XIII/b/4/2.
46 On the role of Congolese women in decolonization and the independence struggle, see K. Bouwer, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo. The Legacy of Patrice Lumumba* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). On Andrée Blouin, who worked for the Lumumba government, see A. K. Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation. How Black Women transformed Citizenship n the French Empire* (Urbane: University of Illinois Press, 2020).

lations became firmly established among Congolese office workers, the majority of the urban population was dependent on subsistence agriculture, women's labour and extended-family networks.[47] Cultural debates, however, had become marginal within the media-based public sphere by the late 1950s. The motto of Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah, "Seek ye first the political kingdom,"[48] was also a leitmotif for the Congolese elite. Everything was subordinated to achieving independence.

Stumbling into independence

Against the background of growing politicization and division among the *évolués*, a failed elite-making policy and the first calls for independence, Belgium got a new government. When the Socialist-Liberal coalition was replaced by a minority PSC government in July 1958, long-standing Governor General Léon Pétillon was promoted to the post of non-party colonial minister. But his enduring commitment to far-reaching political reforms in the Belgian Congo, including greater decentralization of decision-making powers, had attracted criticism not just from the Liberal colonial minister, but even from parts of the PSC. Furthermore, Pétillon was eyed suspiciously as a sympathizer of King Baudouin, who continued to interfere in colonial issues following his much-acclaimed tour of the Congo. Together, the pair championed the idea of a Belgian-Congolese Community and now proposed that it be placed under the guardianship of the Belgian crown.[49] Despite his relative isolation, by convening a *groupe de travail* Pétillon managed to set the course for a cross-party decolonization policy. The *groupe de travail*, aiming to draw up concrete proposals on the political future of the Belgian Congo, brought together representatives of the three major Belgian parties in addition to politicians formerly concerned with colonial policy. In light of the inter-party discord thrown up by the School War, the idea was to ensure an "operation of national unity."[50] After just four months, however, Pétillon had to vacate his post at the Colonial Ministry due to the formation of a new governing coalition forged by Christian Social prime minister Gaston Eyskens with the *Parti Libéral*, though he remained in charge of the *groupe de travail*. The office of co-

47 Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 348.

48 For an analysis of this dictum and its impact on the decolonization of Africa, see A. A. Mazrui, "Seek ye First the Political Kingdom," in *Africa since 1935*, vol. 8, ed. A. A. Mazrui (Paris: UNESCO, 1993).

49 See Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 127.

50 Ibid., 162; Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 63 and 407.

lonial minister went to Christian Social politician Maurice Van Hemelrijck, who was credited with ending the Belgian School War.[51] For the first time after the debate on Belgium's takeover of the Congo Free State in 1908 and subsequent to the colony's strategically important role during the Second World War, the Belgian Congo emerged as a defining topic in Belgian politics.

In October 1958, the high-ranking members of the *groupe de travail* made a tour through the Congo. There they met with intense criticism. Highlighting the lack of representative spokesmen from all regions, Pétillon had opted not to appoint any Congolese.[52] Instead the *groupe de travail* met with 212 Congolese and 250 European so-called "suitable interlocutors"[53] to gain a sense of what people wanted. The *Présence Congolaise*, a weekly supplement to the Catholic daily *Courrier d'Afrique* aimed at Congolese readers, commented sarcastically on this procedure: much as with the *carte du mérite civique*, the authorities ought to introduce a "card for suitable interlocutors," in order to avoid questioning the "wrong" Congolese.[54] Furthermore, the speech by French president Charles de Gaulle, which he had given a few weeks earlier in Brazzaville, had not escaped the vernacular elite's notice. He had aired the prospect of a referendum for the inhabitants of the French colonial empire that would allow them to choose between immediate independence and greater links with the metropole.

In response to this speech, a group of *évolués* from Léopoldville had submitted a petition to the Belgian colonial minister, who was in town preparing for the *groupe de travail*'s visit. They criticized the limited political participation of Congolese in comparison to the neighbouring French colony, welcoming "the present government's aspiration to decolonize the Congo," but assailing the territory's "politically anachronistic system." They demanded nothing less than "total independence."[55]

The signatories presented themselves to the colonial minister as a united group drawn from the capital's "African elite." In addition to mayors from the ABAKO camp, representatives of the most varied political currents in Léopoldville had signed the petition. These included the liberal-minded Patrice Lumumba, who had moved to the capital just a year before from Stanleyville to take up a job as the sales manager of a brewery; Joseph Iléo, one of the co-authors of the

51 Young, *Politics*, 148.

52 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 128.

53 On the composition of this group, see Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 52.

54 Maks, "Une carte d'interlocuteur valable, s.v.p. Je désire être consulté," *Présence Congolaise* (11 October 1958).

55 Letter to Colonial Minister Pétillon, 26 August 1958, quoted in "Importante prise de position des Congolais," *Présence Congolaise*, 30 August 1958, 1 and 7.

Conscience Africaine manifesto, whose roots lay in the progressive Catholic milieu; and Cyrille Adoula, who had by this point made a name for himself as a trades union leader.[56] These three elite representatives founded the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) in autumn 1958 as a response to the *groupe de travail* with its exclusively European appointees. With its call for national unity, the MNC built on the famous "Manifesto," thus disengaging from the turf wars between supporters of the Bakongo and Bangala within city politics. In line with this, the founding members of the MNC included presidents of a variety of regional or ethnic federations in the capital. Among them were Jean Motingia, founder of Liboke Lya Bangala, and Patrice Lumumba, who had championed the overcoming of "ethnic antagonisms"[57] in his role as chair of the *Fédération des Batetela*. In a petition to the *groupe de travail*, the MNC attacked the persistent paternalism of colonial policy and demanded that Congolese participate in the negotiations on the country's political future. The MNC set out its objectives in its founding charter as follows:

> The struggle for the Congolese people's immediate acquisition of the basic rights guaranteed in the Charter of the United Nations; [...] resolute efforts to combat all forms of regional separatism; [...] and the attainment of the country's independence through peaceful negotiations and within a reasonable period of time.[58]

With its nationalist agenda, the MNC was an exception among the six parties that used the *groupe de travail*'s visit as an opportunity to make their voice heard by late 1958. Particularly in those urban settlements in which mayoral elections had taken place, political parties emerged that focussed their efforts on ethnically and regionally defined groups of voters. The capital of the eastern province of Bukavu saw the rise of the *Centre de Regroupement Africain* (CEREA), led by Anicet Kashamura, who had been employed as a clerk in a number of firms and also worked as a journalist.[59] In Léopoldville, the ABAKO saw itself more than ever as the political voice of the Bakongo. In Elisabethville, in the shape of the *Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga* (CONAKAT), the presidents of several ethnic associations forged an alliance between those

56 Lemarchand, *Political*, 198.
57 Speech by Lumumba to the *Fédération des Batetela* on 13 April 1958, quoted in ibid., 201.
58 Le Comité, "Le Mouvement National Congolais est né," *Présence Congolaise* (18 October 1958). On the founding and splintering of the MNC, see the autobiography of one of its members: J. Mbungu Nkandamana, *L'indépendance du Congo belge et l'avènement de Lumumba. Témoignage d'un acteur politique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).
59 Artigue, *Qui sont*, 139.

groups long established within the provincial boundaries. As "authentic Katangans"[60] they sought to oppose incomers from Kasai province, who had managed to win the local elections.[61] Emerging from the local context of the mayoral elections, these parties by no means addressed themselves to all the colony's inhabitants, instead establishing themselves as the representatives of specific groups and regions.

Political communitization through parties institutionalized and intensified the fragmentation of the educated elites. This had been discernible in the internal conflicts afflicting the *évolué* associations but had been played down by the colonial state in view of its efforts to create a supra-ethnic *évolué* community. In retrospect it seems paradoxical that only Patrice Lumumba, who advanced to become the West's bogey during the Congo Crisis as a "new Lucifer,"[62] addressed the colony's inhabitants in the way the *Voix du Congolais* had done for years: as Congolese. The MNC's references to an ethnically heterogenous but indivisible Congolese nation – though reframed through a democratic lens – preserved the colonial state's discourse on a nationwide elite as an "imagined community."[63]

Lumumba's definitive transformation from model *évolué* to anti-colonialist, however, only occurred a few weeks after the founding of the MNC. In December 1958, when the *groupe de travail* was still fine-tuning its final report, Ghanaian prime minister Kwame Nkrumah had invited African representatives of the colonized countries to attend the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) in Accra.[64] While the General Government prevented ABAKO leader Kasa-Vubu, known as a vehement critic of colonialism, from attending due to supposed *lacunae* in his vaccination certificate,[65] Lumumba, along with two other delegates of the MNC, were permitted to leave the country.[66] In independent Ghana Lu-

60 CONAKAT, quoted in Lemarchand, "Limits," 411.

61 Young, *Politics*, 298; Lemarchand, *Political*, 194.

62 This is how the former Belgian ambassador to the Congo, Jean van den Bosch, described Lumumba in an article in *La Libre Belgique* of 7 December 1960; L. De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (New York: Verso, 2011), 318.

63 On this concept, see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

64 J. Mohan, "Ghana, Congo, and the United Nations," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (1969).

65 Gilis, *Kasa-Vubu*, 118; Z. J. M. Kasa-Vubu, *Joseph Kasa-Vubu, mon père: De la naissance d'une conscience nationale à l'indépendance* (Brussels: Chabassol, 1985), 117. A greeting from Kasa-Vubu was, however, read out at the AAPC. See B. Verhaegen, *L'ABAKO et l'indépendance du Congo belge. Dix ans de nationalisme kongo (1950 – 1960)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 268.

66 Other attendees included MNC founding members Gaston Diomi and Joseph Ngalula. Jean-Pierre Dericoyard, president of the *Classes Moyennes Africaines* association, also made it to the

mumba encountered numerous figures in the African decolonization movement. Within a few days, he had forged a close personal connection with Nkrumah,[67] got involved in a number of committees[68] and concluded his conference speech with the words: "Down with colonialism and imperialism. Down with racism and tribalism."[69] When Lumumba touched down in Léopoldville in mid-December 1958, he brought back with him a pan-African and anti-imperialist ideology.[70]

On 24 December 1958, Colonial Minister Van Hemelrijck received a detailed plan from the *groupe de travail* on the Belgian Congo's political future. The goal identified by the report was a democratic, unitary and autonomous state that should gradually be granted legislative and executive power. The European and Congolese population should be free to decide the nature of its relationship with Belgium. While the report included many details on the gradual development of corresponding institutions, it did not propose a timetable for the implementation of reforms. And because it continued to assume a lengthy transition period, it made no mention of independence either.[71] Before the report could be presented to the Belgian parliament in late January 1959, however, it had already become obsolete due to the rapid succession of events in the Congo. For regardless of the cross-party consensus on the colonial reforms in Brussels, tensions were rising in Léopoldville.

First, at an MNC rally on 28 December 1958, Patrice Lumumba had reported back to an audience of several thousand on the Accra conference and called for an immediate end to colonial rule.[72] The ABAKO under Kasa-Vubu was put on the spot by the MNC's adoption of "its" demand for immediate independence. For the ABAKO, the ideologically radicalized MNC, now also connected to pan-African networks, was serious competition. Previously, ABAKO leaders had viewed the MNC merely as the party of the incomers, but now it was setting itself up as the representative of "all Congolese" and as the opponent of the "Balkaniza-

conference. Lumumba owed his attendance to Kenyan independence fighter Tom Mboya, who is said to have been made aware of Lumumba during his layover in Léopoldville; G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo. From Leopold to Kabila. A People's History* (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 84. Lumumba received an official invitation just three days before the start of the conference.

67 On the significance of the Congo to Nkrumah's foreign policy, see K. Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo* (New York: Panaf, 1967).

68 La Conférence des peuples d'Afrique à Accra, FV/RDC/Lumumba/N°009/4, 7.

69 Lumumba's speech in Accra, 11 December 1958, FV/RDC/Lumumba/N°009/4.

70 On the history and ideology of pan-Africanism, see A. Boukari-Yabara, *Africa Unite! Une histoire du panafricanisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 2014).

71 On this report, see Stenmans and Reyntjens, *La pensée politique*, 52–53; Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 91.

72 Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 84.

tion of the national territory."[73] The ABAKO quickly called a mass meeting of its own for 4 January 1959, though it was prohibited by the colonial administration at short notice. Several thousand people turned up nonetheless, a number that swelled when they were joined by some of the 20,000 football fans in the area. When Kasa-Vubu sought to terminate the gathering in accordance with the regulations, there were calls for "independence" and scuffles with Europeans. The mood of the crowd then shifted,[74] triggering three days of unrest in the capital that was put down by the colonial state. According to estimates, the result was between 250 and 400 dead and several hundred injured Congolese. Countless European-owned shops were looted, while some of the establishments run by the mission station and colonial administration were vandalized.[75] The three ABAKO mayors, Joseph Kasa-Vubu, Gaston Diomi and Arthur Pinzi, were briefly detained.[76]

Since Belgium was keen to prevent a bloody colonial war of the kind waged for years by the French in Algeria, the violence in Léopoldville accelerated the decolonization process in unforeseen ways. Despite initial resistance from a few ministers from the *Parti Libéral* and the PSC, the Belgian government agreed to use the controversial term "independence" when presenting its reform plans to parliament. But King Baudouin beat them to the punch: in a radio address shortly before the scheduled parliamentary session he heralded "independence with no headlong rush."[77] The subsequent government statement merely set out in more detail the gradual democratization of the Belgian Congo. This was to begin in late 1959 with elections at the local and territorial level, before being extended to the provincial and national level in the near future. Before the day was over, the colonial government also enacted the controversial *statut unique*, which eliminated inequality between Africans and Congolese in the world of work and with respect to pay. By announcing the "Africanization of the leadership cadres," the government sought to keep the politicized and anti-colonial elite in check.[78] At the stroke of a pen, moreover, all laws that

73 Lumumba speech on 28 December 1958, reprinted in *Présence Congolaise* (3 January 1959).
74 For a summary of these events, see "Le récit des évenements," *Horizons* (18 January 1959); Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 293 – 294.
75 See Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 85; Young, *Politics*, 290.
76 C. Braeckman, ed., *Congo 1960. Échec d'une décolonisation* (Brussels: GRIP, 2010), 66.
77 Radio address by King Baudouin on 13 January 1959, quoted in ibid., 65.
78 Government statement of 13 January 1959, reprinted in *Présence Africaine* (17 January 1959): 7. In March 1957, a list was published of more than 400 state officials, doctor's assistants and office workers, which the reform had elevated into the highest wage bracket. See "En guise d'Africanisation des cadres," *Présence Congolaise*, 7 (March 1959): 13.

had enshrined discrimination against the African population were rescinded. Finally, the regulations on freedom of the press and freedom of assembly were relaxed once again.[79]

Fig. 16: Poster bearing the slogan "Belgium keeps its promises." Information campaign by the colonial administration in the run-up to the elections planned for December 1959.

As the end of colonial rule loomed, the vernacular elite broke decisively with their self-understanding as a colonial elite. Through the establishment of legal equality between Africans and Europeans, the few privileges their lengthy struggle for elite status had brought them now ceased to exist. The elite, along with the rest of the Congolese population, were now placed on the same legal level as Europeans. A Portuguese diplomat who had been following elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo from the neighbouring colony of Angola ridiculed the Belgian attempt to declare all Africans civilized overnight.[80] From now on, the colonial legal system, which withheld rights from the African population by

79 Government statement of 13 January 1959, reprinted in *Présence Africaine* (17 January 1959): 7.
80 See Keese, *Living*, 66 – 67.

highlighting their insufficient cultural assimilation, endured only in Portugal's overseas provinces. There, much like *évolué* status, the *assimilado* status, which was reformed only in 1954, granted partial privileges to just a few of the "assimilated."[81]

The vernacular elite in the Belgian Congo, which had been confronted with promises of reform on a number of occasions since the end of the Second World War, resigned themselves neither to a few modifications here and there nor to the vague prospect of independence, instead accelerating the pace of colonial development, which the architects of colonial policy had so far done all they could to slow. The elite finally gave the lie to Belgian actors' cherished belief that they alone could control political developments. Most of those Congolese dubbed *évolués* were no longer interested in the civilizational development of their own character. They had also abandoned their faith in the reformability of the colonial system, considering themselves long since mature enough to determine their country's future course as politicians.

While the symbolic capital associated with the status of *évolué* may have been devalued, the Congolese elite transformed its cultural and social capital into political currency. Their many years of experience with the colonial public sphere, their leadership of associations, their eloquence and deft articulation of demands to the colonial authorities, as well as the development of ramified networks of supporters: all of this furnished the *évolués*, who had been closely aligned with the colonial state, with a competitive edge in political terms. The cultural bourgeoisification of the Congolese elite now had repercussions displeasing to Belgian politicians responsible for colonial policy. The other half of the bourgeois citizen, which had been suppressed by the colonial state's elite formation, now came to light. The Congolese bourgeoisie no longer strove for cultural perfectibility but for political participation – and power.

With independence in sight, the founding of political parties reached its apogee. By mid-1959 there were more than 100.[82] It is no coincidence that there were personal and structural continuities between Congolese associations and the new political parties.[83] The associations engendered by the colonial state's elite-making policy, which were apolitical by design, had left their mem-

81 From 1954 onwards, applicants for *assimilado* status had to submit a certificate confirming a Catholic christening and provide evidence of a civil marriage, a "civilized" job, a Portuguese way of life and a Portuguese sponsor. By 1959, just 5,000 Africans had been granted this status, or 0.8 percent of the population; L. M. Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 118.

82 Young, *Politics*, 298.

83 For an overview, see Bakajika, *Partis et société civile*; Lafontaine, *City Politics*, 210 – 215.

bers with know-how germane to their work within political parties.[84] Much like Western European associations in the nineteenth century, they turned out to be the "political workshop of the elite."[85] At times, associations were merged into parties, while at other times several associations joined forces. Their membership of multiple associations furnished members of the vernacular elite with an array of opportunities for cooperation. The opportunistic search for majorities, meanwhile, led to breakaways, federations, disbandment and the foundation of new groupings.[86]

But the existing associational landscape of the Congolese elite was of only limited use when it came to the competitive struggle for voters' support. The politicization of the ADAPES and ASSANEF alumni associations, which were active throughout the colony – as pursued, for example, by board member Antoine-Roger Bolamba – was a failure.[87] The influential members of these institutions, which were close to the missions, had long since associated themselves with various factions, which reflected ethnic, regional and linguistic forms of identification but also differing views on the timetable for independence, as well as contrasting attitudes towards the colonial state and the future political order of the Congo.

Against the background of an increasingly radical critique of colonialism, parties with a moderate stance that supported the official policy of gradually introducing Congolese to political office or advocated cooperation with Belgian actors were viewed as the henchmen of imperialism.[88] The vernacular elite's long-sought proximity to the European milieu and their arrangement with Belgian rule were now interpreted as betrayal in the battle between the political parties.

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84 Thomas Hodgkin puts forward similar arguments with respect to colonial Africa as a whole. By 1958, he was already interpreting African associations as breeding grounds for national movements and as workshops of cultural practices relevant to the world of politics; T. Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (London: Muller, 1958), 91. Other studies in colonial history also highlight the transformation of associations into parties. The TANU (Tanganyika African National Union), for example, emerged out of the apolitical Tanganyika African Association in 1954, largely thanks to the efforts of Julius Nyerere, later president of Tanzania. See Eckert, *Herrschen*, 127–128.

85 Banti, "Der Verein," 110.

86 Overviews of the political parties are provided by M. C. De Backer, *Note pour servir à l'étude des 'groupements politiques' à Léopoldville* (Brussels: Office de l'information et des relations publiques pour le Congo, 1959); A. Böhm, *Gott und die Krokodile. Eine Reise durch den Kongo* (Munich: Pantheon, 2011), 194–196.

87 "L'ASSANEF, neuvième parti politique?," *Présence Congolaise*, 21 March 1959; "A l'ASSANEF," *Présence Congolaise* (4 April 1959).

88 Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 303.

The *Parti National du Progrès* (PNP),[89] which developed out of twenty-seven regional parties, included former members of the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agrément* in the shape of Paul Bolya and Jean-Pierre Dericoyard, who maintained contact with Belgian politicians responsible for colonial policy. This invited the political competition to corrupt the party abbreviation. PNP now stood for the *Parti des Nègres Payés* or *Pene Pene Na Mundele*, which means "close to the white man" in Lingala.[90] In light of his decades in the employ of the Scheut missionaries, Jean Bolikango was mocked as "*pene pene na Maria*."[91] Former editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, associated with the *Parti Libéral* in the mid-1950s, cast in his lot with the MNC in 1960. The other parties used the fact that he now chanted "Down with colonialism!"[92] at campaign rallies and assisted Patrice Lumumba to discredit Bolamba as a turncoat who was struggling to conceal his betrayal of the Congolese people.[93] The anti-colonial vernacular elite, whose members had previously accused one another of failing to live up to the colonial ideal of the "perfected black," now assailed each other over their recent past.[94]

These allegations filled the column inches of the countless party publications that went to press across the country in 1959.[95] Through the dominance of competing party newspapers and constantly shifting alliances, the vernacular elite's once highly controlled realm of media communication, typified by polite phrases, gave way to a late colonial cacophony of mutual slander. It was Congolese authors who had learned their trade working for the periodicals of the colonial public sphere that saw to the publication and editing of these "militant publications."[96] Mathieu Ekatou of the short-lived *Congo* wrote for *Indépendance*, the organ of Lumumba's MNC. Auguste Camille Mwissa-Camus of *Horizons*, who

89 The PNP was one of the few parties with a presence throughout the territory. See Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 412.

90 Ibid., 414 and 591; Lemarchand, *Political*, 212.

91 F. Lukunku, "A Monsieur Jean Bolikango," *Indépendance* (30 April 1960).

92 A.-R. Bolamba, "Important discours prononcé par M. Antoine-Roger Bolamba au congrès de Coquilhatville," *Indépendance* (30 April 1960).

93 "Les 4 vérités, Antoine R. Bolamba ou 'la voix du son maître,'" *Présence Congolaise* (24 September 1960). The *Présence Congolaise* developed into the political voice of the breakaway MNC-Kalonji.

94 Their past as model *évolués* did not doom Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu, probably due to their early radicalization. In other African colonies too, members of the Congolese elite formerly close to the colonial state cast off their past with varying degrees of success. On the case of Tanganyika, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 190 – 191.

95 For an overview of the party newspapers, see Lemarchand, *Political*, 268.

96 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 456.

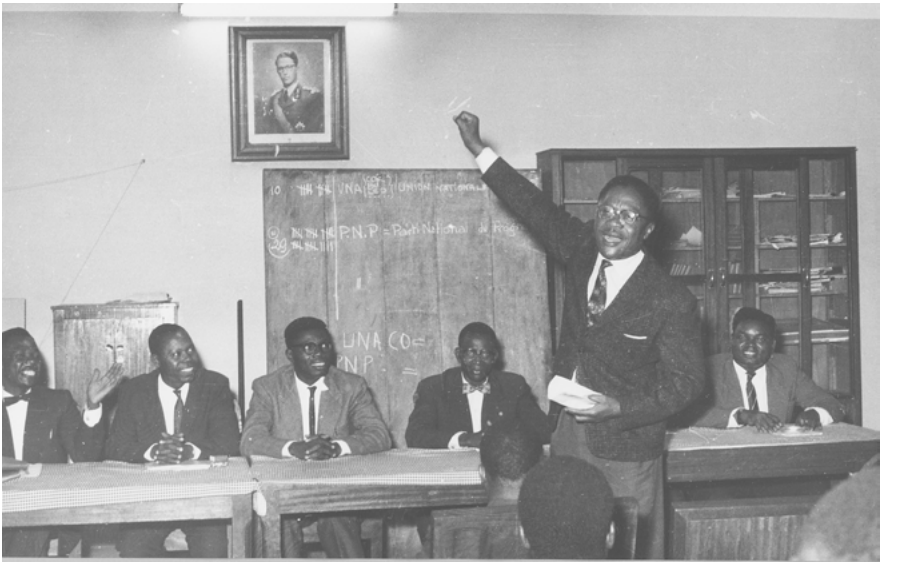

Fig. 17: Founding meeting of the PNP in Coquilhatville, 1959. Ferdinand Essandja is giving a speech; a picture of King Baudouin hangs on the wall. Party colleague Jean-Pierre Dericoyard is listening (fourth from left).

had initially established the moderate *Union Progressiste Congolaise*, together with other editors from the Scheut milieu working for that daily, took charge of the *Nation Congolaise*, the party periodical of the PUNA, led by his former teacher Jean Bolikango. As president of the *Interfédérale*, Bolikango, now occupying a senior position in the General Government, had had to acknowledge the failure of the coalition of incomers to Léopoldville labelled as Bangala. Through the PUNA, he now focussed exclusively on the residents of his parents' home province of Équateur.[97]

To reach their clientele, the party newspapers were published not just in French but also in the language of the target electorate. Furthermore, the leading figures of some parties complemented their self-portrayals as the assimilated elite through demonstrative traditionalism. As president of the PNP, Paul Bolya appeared in group photos with a traditional spear and draped a leopard skin over his three-piece suit at election campaign events.[98] In addition to

97 Bakajika, *Partis et société civile*, 63–64; Lemarchand, *Political*, 196.

98 Relevant depictions of Bolya appear in Sabakinu Kivilu, "Paul-Gabriel Dieudonné Bolya," 237; Lemarchand, *Political*, 178.

mass gatherings in public spaces, the Congolese parties also sought to gain supporters through meetings in urban bars. In Léopoldville, the consumption of beer was tantamount to a political statement: the slim Polar bottle was emblematic of MNC president, Patrice Lumumba, who had been sales manager for this brand in the late 1950s. By purchasing the bulbous rival product, Primus, ABAKO supporters demonstrated their allegiance to the equally portly Joseph Kasa-Vubu.[99] On the campaign trail, the Congolese elite transformed urban bars from one-time dens of iniquity into an important arena of late colonial politicization.

Though all the parties in the Congo talked about independence, they did not all mean the same thing by it. The Belgian politicians who clung to the illusion of orderly decolonization were also at odds over what the Congo of tomorrow ought to look like. Alongside the official government strategy of laying the ground for a unitary state, an increasing number of figures in the General Government favoured a federalist solution.[100] Congolese parties who played the card of tribal and regional affiliation and knew they had majorities behind them within provincial boundaries also backed a federal state. The CONAKAT championed an autonomous Katanga with strong links to Belgium and by speaking in terms of a Belgian-Congolese Community deftly placed itself in continuity with colonial policy.[101] Under the leadership of Congolese businessman Moïse Tshombé, a member of the *Conseil de Gouvernement* who had otherwise kept his distance from the colonial state's elite-making institutions, the CONAKAT had shifted away from its hostile attitude towards the European population. Hitherto, it had accused Europeans of favouring the Baluba newcomers. But as the CONAKAT moved closer to the positions of the *Union Katangaise* settlers' party, it became the Congolese voice of the influential European milieu of Katanga. For its election campaign, the CONAKAT could count on the support of the settlers' associations, the *Essor du Congo* as an opinion-leading local newspaper, and financially strong firms such as the UMHK.[102] The ABAKO under Kasa-Vubu, on the other hand, aspired to achieve a state for the Bakongo, which would extend from the Atlantic coast of Bas-Congo to Léopoldville. Oriented towards the borders of the vanished Congo kingdom, however, the state territory was to include parts of AEF and Portuguese Angola as well.

99 On the role of beer in the election campaign in Léopoldville, see Gilis, *Kasa-Vubu*, 105; J. O. Tshonda and B. Verhaegen, "Patrice Lumumba et la guerre des bières," in *Patrice Lumumba entre Dieu et Diable*, eds. P. Halen and J. Riesz (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

100 On this faction, see Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 91.

101 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 414.

102 Lemarchand, *Political*, 237 – 242.

These federalist parties were opposed by unitarists insisting on national unity within the borders of the Belgian Congo, such as Lumumba's MNC and the PNP. This aspiration to national reach, however, failed due to the ethnically and regionally fissured party landscape. While Lumumba, as MNC president, had initially canvassed support in Belgium for his preferred option of independence among representatives of all Belgian political parties in the spring of 1960, following his return to the Congo he tried in vain to achieve a joint position at the first congress of several Congolese parties in Luluabourg. The idea of pan-African solidarity failed even within his own party. In light of Lumumba's sharper tone towards the Belgian government and his growing claims to leadership, a moderate wing led by founding members Joseph Iléo, Cyrille Adoula and Joseph Ngalula broke away. The MNC, as a supra-ethnic party, which had by now established itself in several provinces through local lobbying offices, thus disintegrated. While Lumumba could build on a loyal following in Stanleyville, the site of his first political activities, his position in Léopoldville had been weakened by the departure of the local leadership. Particularly in the provinces of Katanga and Équateur, former MNC sympathizers then threw in their lot with parties defined in ethnic terms. The breakaway party faction, meanwhile, came under the leadership of Albert Kalonji, a former employee in the colonial administration and journalist for the *Présence Africaine*, who also succeeded in gaining the allegiance of the Baluba in his home province of Kasai. From now on, Lumumba's MNC, which was essentially nationalist in orientation, used the tensions between the two largest ethnic groups in the province to present itself as the champion of the Lulua, who had an antagonistic relationship with the Baluba.[103]

The disintegration of the federations of several regional and ethnic associations, forged for strategic reasons after the mayoral elections in Léopoldville, triggered the foundation of a whole slew of parties in a city with an ethnically diverse population. In addition to the aforementioned PUNA, the FEDEQUALAC gave rise to the *Union Mongo* (UNIMO). UNIMO president Justin Bomboko, who had returned shortly before from studies at the Free University of Brussels as its first Congolese student, drew his support from the Mongo in Équateur province. He even dreamed of reconstructing the Mongo kingdom, as described by the Scheut missionaries in their ethnographies. Out of the ruins of the FEDAKWALEO, meanwhile, arose several parties defined in ethnic terms or based on administrative districts, namely *Abazi*, *Luka* and the *Parti Solidaire Africain* (PSA), which now tried to attract voters in their home provinces. Much like the ABAKO, the area of influence of the PSA, whose leadership consisted of gradu-

103 Ibid., 202–207.

ates of the Jesuit mission school in Kikwit, was in Léopoldville's immediate hinterland and, like the ABAKO, it succeeded in expanding into the region.[104]

If we focus on its political parties, the Congo disintegrated into countless, partially overlapping areas of influence, with representatives of the vernacular elite doing all they could to assert their power over them. In this context, independence could mean relations with Belgium as well as the relationship between the colony's territories. Differing ideas about a possible political future, as described by Frederick Cooper for Africa after 1945,[105] now emerged in the Belgian Congo as well.

The issue of the scope of the Congo's promised independence and what form it ought to take divided the Belgian camp as well. Political parties continued to disagree with each other and there was discord within their own ranks. Opinion among officials in Brussels and the Congo-based administration also diverged. In this climate of tension and confusion, the royal house and the government argued over who ought to be appointed to key posts in the General Government and Colonial Ministry. Under pressure from the Christian Social Party leadership, Maurice Van Hemelrijck vacated his post as colonial minister: he was viewed as the plaything of nationalist forces after entering into dialogue with Congolese politicians. Van Hemelrijck was succeeded by August de Schryver, who had played an instrumental role in transforming the *Parti Catholique* into the PSC after the Second World War as the new party's president and was regarded as a political heavyweight. It was during his tenure, in October 1959, that the Belgian government formulated plans for a restrictive version of independence. This provided for key areas such as defence and economy, foreign policy and monetary policy to remain in Belgian hands for a lengthy period while political institutions were established.[106]

The struggle over the timing and extent of independence thus entered the next round. The leaders of the Congolese parties, all too familiar as *évolués* with the colonial state's strategy of delay, stepped up their efforts to accelerate the pace of change. The elections at local and territorial level, scheduled for late 1959 in the government statement, were boycotted by several parties. In the important port city of Matadi and other parts of the western province of Bas Congo, the core area of ABAKO support, just over one per cent of the elec-

104 Ibid., 19, 155, 255. On the PSA, see H. F. Weiss and B. Verhaegen, *Parti solidaire africain (P.S.A.), documents 1959 – 1960* (Brussels: Centre de Recherche et d'Information Socio-Politiques, 1963).

105 Cooper, *Africa*, 38.

106 Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, 129 – 130.

torate cast a vote.[107] There the colonial administration was increasingly losing control, as evident, among other things in residents' refusal to pay their taxes. Following an MNC party conference in Stanleyville, at which Lumumba had described further cooperation with Belgium as "impossible" and called on his supporters to launch a "Congolese revolution,"[108] riots broke out that resulted in several deaths. Lumumba was arrested for inciting the masses.

To avoid further violence and avert the country's disintegration, the Belgian government backed down. Ruling out the military option, it embraced the opposition PSB's proposal to convene a *table ronde* made up of Belgian and Congolese representatives.[109] The question of independence was to be settled through the Belgian tradition of compromise, which centered on the political resolution of entrenched conflicts.[110] Beginning in late January 1960, then, meetings took place in Brussels at which delegates from the Congolese and Belgian parties, on the basis of equal representation, deliberated on the political system of an independent Congo.[111] At the Belgian side of the table sat representatives of the Liberal, Socialist and Christian Social parties; the Flemish nationalists and the politically marginalized PCB were excluded. Delegations from the fourteen leading parties in the Congo made the trip to the metropole: the ABAKO, the two factions of the MNC, the CONAKAT from Katanga and its rival BALUBAKAT, the moderate PNP and the *Union Congolaise*. The disunited Congolese parties overcame their differences during the one month of negotiations. Even Patrice Lumumba was released from prison at short notice at the insistence of all the Congolese delegates and soon took his seat next to them. The African politicians, no longer willing to have the course of events dictated to them, closed ranks against the Belgian delegation. Men who had for years been condemned to look up to Europeans were now negotiating with them at eye level. As a "United Front" they caught their Belgian negotiating partners off guard, successfully demanding that the talks be resumed only when a date for independence had been fixed. Surprisingly, the *table ronde* agreed that the Congo should be granted independence after parliamentary elections on 30 June 1960.

In their new role as politicians, it was the former *évolués* who set the pace of developments. Furthermore, neither the Belgian party delegates' demand for a Belgian-Congolese Union linked by the Belgian crown nor the suggestion that

107 Lemarchand, *Political*, 255.

108 Lumumba, quoted in Tshonda and Verhaegen, *Lumumba: Acteur politique*, 284–285.

109 See Vanthemsche, "Belgische socialisten." Otherwise the PSB remained quiescent on colonial policy.

110 Vanthemsche, *Belgique et le Congo*, 133.

111 Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 302; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 434–446.

a number of key ministries remain in Belgian hands were accepted.[112] Still, a Belgian imprint was evident in the political system adopted for the independent Congo: the democratic unitary state had a parliament with two chambers that appointed a president, while the prime minister functioned as head of government; provincial governments with limited powers completed the picture. The members of the Parliament were to be directly elected just four months later, at the end of May 1960, while those of the Senate would be appointed by provincial assemblies.

Rise of the old elite, breakup of the new state

Back in the Congo, the United Front, which had been held together only by its members' desire for independence as soon as possible, fell apart. In the rushed election campaign, the tensions and rifts between the Congolese parties resurfaced. These parties, most of which sought to attract the support of a regionally and ethnically bounded section of the population, organized conferences in an attempt to forge fruitful alliances and formed strategic coalitions as a means of attaining parliamentary majorities. The elections were won by the MNC under Patrice Lumumba, followed by the regionally oriented PNP, PSA and ABAKO.[113] At the provincial level, parties that mobilized large enough ethnic electorates were victorious: the CONAKAT in Katanga, the PUNA under Jean Bolikango in Équateur, the MNC under Albert Kalonji in Kasai, and the ABAKO in Bas Congo.[114] Lumumba's MNC also achieved its best result in his home province of Orientale.

While the electoral map laid bare the country's sharp divisions, as the winner of the election Lumumba tried to put together a government with broad support, allocating cabinet posts to representatives of the ten strongest parties. Lumumba's ministerial line-up embodied the political divisions of the Congo, but its members were extremely similar in terms of their social profile. The leading figures in the government were all illustrious representatives of the Congolese elite who had made names for themselves in the colonial public sphere since 1945 as authors, association presidents or holders of elite status. Of the 38 ministers, 22 had been clerks in the employ of the administration, while a further six

112 Vanthemsche, *Belgique et le Congo*, 131–132.

113 The elections of May 1960 left the MNC with 40 of 137 seats, followed by the PSA (13 seats) and ABAKO (12 seats). See Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 474.

114 Lemarchand, *Political*, 244–245.

had been doctor's assistants or journalists.[115] Their names have appeared repeatedly in the present volume: President Joseph Kasa-Vubu (ABAKO) as one of the few immatriculated; Minister for Public Works Alphonse Salongo (MNC-Lumumba) as the diligent recruiter of new subscribers to the *Voix du Congolais*; Minister of Information and Culture Antoine-Roger Bolamba (MNC-Lumumba) as editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*; Minister of State Paul Bolya (PNP) as secretary of the *Cercle d'Études et d'Agrément* and trainer at the school for doctor's assistants; university graduates Thomas Kanza (without party affiliation) as ambassador to the UN and Justin Bomboko (UNIMO) as foreign minister. The parliament too was dominated by members of the *évolué* generation who had started their professional careers after the Second World War and had initially believed the promises of developmental colonialism.[116] More than half the parliamentarians were born between 1920 and 1930, while six out of ten had done the jobs typical of the vernacular elite, with former office workers predominating within both parliament and cabinet.[117]

Fig. 18: The first Congolese government under Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba (front row with bow tie) in the gardens of the *Palais de la Nation* in Léopoldville.

115 On their biographies, see Artigue, *Qui sont*.

116 Of 137 parliamentarians, just five were above 50 years of age.

117 Detailed information on parliamentarians' social profile is provided by Lemarchand, *Political*, 227–228.

The Congolese elite became the political elite of an independent state with lightning speed. In the Congo's first cabinet, it was common for an individual to be promoted from underling in the colonial administrative office to minister in one fell swoop. Drawing on elite theorist Vilfredo Pareto's notion of the circulation of elites,[118] it was the Congolese "reserve elite" that took the helm upon independence.

Yet the stellar career of former *évolués* meant that they had a long way to fall. The highest offices of state were occupied by a group that contained within themselves the contradiction, inherent in Belgian colonial rule, between territorial unity and ethnic fragmentation. After independence, these ambivalences broke out into the open as a result of the Congo Crisis. The Congolese elite thus stumbled into one of the largest-scale Cold War proxy conflicts on African soil.[119] The Congo of tomorrow, awaited with such impatience, became embroiled in a bloody conflict in which Belgium, the superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union, Ghana and the United Nations all intervened – leaving Congolese politicians with little room for manoeuvre.

This was preceded by several events that turned into a national crisis. A few days after the independence celebrations, parts of the *Force Publique* mutinied, unwilling to accept Belgian generals' temporary authority. Several regions subsequently saw attacks on Europeans, to which Belgium responded with military intervention. The mass evacuation of the European population began. Since Congolese had only recently been allowed to occupy key positions, the country abruptly lost all its senior staff in administration and economy. The province of Katanga simultaneously declared its independence. Supported by the firms and European elites based there, as well as a number of officials in the Belgian government, Moïse Tshombé of CONAKAT made a reality of the rich industrial province's long-cherished desire for autonomy.[120] At Lumumba's behest, the UN then sent peacekeepers, but they merely cemented the status quo of a crumbling state. Albert Kalonji, leader of the breakaway wing of the MNC, also proclaimed the independence of his diamond-rich ancestral province of Kasai; there Lumumba's deployment of Congolese troops ended in a bloodbath. It thus seems unsurprising that Jean Bolikango sought to establish an independent state in Équateur province, though he failed due to lack of support from Belgian interest groups. The secessionist leaders had all been among the losers when Lu-

118 Hartmann, *Elitesoziologie*, 28 – 29.

119 See Young, *Politics*, 307 – 357; A. Wirz, *Krieg in Afrika. Die nachkolonialen Konflikte in Nigeria, Sudan, Tschad und Kongo* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1982), chapter 4.

120 Lemarchand, *Political*, 247.

mumba formed his government: Tshombé's CONAKAT held just one ministerial post, Bolikango was denied the presidency he had been hoping for and Kalonji's MNC came away with nothing at all.[121] As a unitary state, the independent Congo was too small for the ambitions of the many provincial leaders – and fell apart.

When Lumumba, frustrated at the lack of support from the United States and the UN, increasingly turned to the Soviet Union, the Congo finally became a pawn in the hands of the superpowers, which perceived the country as an important provider of raw materials for weapons production. Henceforth, the global public saw Lumumba, the former *évolué* and sympathizer of the *Parti Libéral*, as a fervent communist, one whom the CIA and Belgium tried to neutralize. As the first democratically elected prime minister of the independent Congo, Lumumba barely had a chance to govern at all – after less than six months in office, he was murdered by political opponents in Katanga at the age of 35.[122] The Congo crises and the armed forces' reestablishment of national unity extended over a period of several years. In 1965, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, Lumumba's long-standing personal secretary, who was subsequently involved in his removal as a general in the *Force Publique*, began his 30 years of autocratic rule. Mobutu's departure in turn marked the beginning of a war that continues to this day. The political future of Congo remains uncertain.[123]

Time and again, scholars and journalists have identified the insufficient development of a vernacular elite as a reason for the Congo crisis. As evidence, they point to the extremely small number of Congolese university graduates at the point of independence. But we must ask what a larger number of academics could have accomplished in the face of the Cold War as fought out on Congolese territory. As we have seen, the meagre cohort of university graduates does highlight the special features of Belgian education policy in the Congo. But the fact that there were so few graduates is not a wholly convincing basis for an assessment of colonial elite-making as entirely fruitless.[124] This is because the mission secondary schools, but also the associations, created a non-university educational elite. While its potential was not exhausted within the colonial order, its cultural bourgeoisification continued to exercise an important effect after independence.

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121 Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 359.

122 On the killing of Lumumba, see De Witte, *Assassination of Lumumba*.

123 On the political developments and wars in Congo into the early 2000s, see D. Johnson, *Kongo. Kriege, Korruption und die Kunst des Überlebens* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandel und Apsel, 2008).

124 For this line of argument, see H. F. Weiss, "L'évolution des élites. Comparaison entre la situation en Afrique occidentale," *Etudes Congolaises* 5 (1965).

The path to bourgeoisification led to a dead end in the colonial situation. But from a long-term perspective, a better metaphor might be running the gauntlet, an experience that ultimately left scars yet strengthened the Congolese elite. It was none other than the culturally bourgeoisified *évolués* who assured themselves of a place in the many governments and that attained positions of power under the First Republic of the 1960s. For example, amid the turmoil of the Congo crises, Joseph Iléo and Cyrille Adoula, two of the founding members of the MNC and former clerks, held the post of prime minister. The ministries went to individuals long known to one another as fellow *évolués* or former political adversaries. Jean-Pierre Dericoyard, once the champion of immatriculation reform and president of the *Classes Moyennes Africaines* association, first headed the Ministry for Public Works, then the Ministry for the Economy. The two former editors-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais*, Antoine-Roger Bolamba and Michel Colin, alternated as information minister.[125]

But former *évolués* also rose to prominence beyond the tumult of post-colonial politics. Many of those who had worked as clerks in the colonial administration went on to enjoy careers as senior officials, such as Antoine-Marie Mobé, former president of the *évolué* association in Stanleyville, who headed the central government's Foreign Trade Department.[126] Anyone interviewing the former Congolese colonial elite in present-day Kinshasa will meet not just with senators and ambassadors, but also retired or aged luminaries of economy and media. The offspring of former *évolués* typically became highly educated and professionally successful individuals. The grandson of Antoine-Roger Bolamba, for example, not only bears the same name as his grandfather but has followed in his footsteps professionally as a newsreader on Congolese state television.[127] If we trace the biographies and *curricula vitae* of former members of the colonial elite over several decades and across generations,[128] we encounter successful

125 In addition, Paul Bolya, for example, was not only minister of state in Lumumba's government (30 June-11 September 1960), but also in the government of Joseph Iléo (12 September-10 October 1960) and he was health minister under Cyrille Adoula as well (11 July 1962 – 18 April 1963).

126 Artigue, *Qui sont*, 216.

127 Interview with Antoine-Roger Bolamba, Kinshasa, 18 August 2010 and 19 August 2010.

128 For a long-term analysis of an elite group of civil servants from northern Ghana since the 1930s, see C. Lentz, "Constructing Ethnicity: Elite Biographies and Funerals in Ghana," in *Ethnicity, Belonging and Biographies*, eds. G. Rosenthal and A. Bogner (Münster: Lit, 2009), 184 – 186; C. Lentz, "'I Take an Oath to the State, not the Government.' Career Trajectories and Professional Ethics of Ghanaian Public Servants," in *States at Work: Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, eds. T. Bierschenk and J.-P. Olivier de Sardan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 181 – 185. On the case of Tanganyika, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 236 – 242.

but also complex, serpentine lives moulded by the country's many changes of regime and crises. We find individuals whose parents were illiterate and whose children studied at US-American universities.

Nonetheless, the Congo's late colonial and post-colonial crises can in part be traced back to colonial elite-making policy. Paradoxically, the fact that the Congolese elite was numerically weak, internally divided and almost entirely unprepared for its new political responsibilities is evidence of the success rather than failure of elite-making policy. It was the colonial state's declared goal to exclude the vernacular population for as long as possible from political participation, higher education and positions of responsibility.[129] The chaos and power vacuum that the agents of Belgian policy warned of in the event of premature independence – and which they cited to justify a depoliticized developmental colonialism and paternalistic approach to elite formation – was a direct consequence of elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo.

129 See Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 20.

Conclusion

The Lumumba generation was the child of late colonial elite-making policy, occupying a position within the colonial order aptly described by Andreas Eckert as "intermediary ambivalence."[1] Moulded by the contradictory elements of Belgian colonial rule, this generation emerged in the field of tension between systematic integration into and exclusion from colonial structures. The key elements here were the development that Congolese were supposed to achieve and the political participation they were denied, unfulfilled promises of social advancement and persistent oppression, the unity that colonial officials called for and the fragmentation they fostered. This was an elite-making policy that sowed subjugation and reaped rebellion.

Summary

The emergence of a Congolese elite represented an integral but subordinate component of Belgian developmental colonialism after 1945. In contrast to the medium-term programme of economic modernization such as the Ten-Year Plan, the development of the elite was regarded as a long-term project that would require a lot more than 10 years. Well aware that within the post-war international order any acknowledgment of colonial subjects' civilizational maturity would ultimately lead to political self-determination for the African population, Belgium was in no rush to accelerate the process of elite formation. By focusing on the need to foster the *évolués*' "character," the Belgian colonial government sought to shift attention away from the international community's criticism of its failure to implement political reforms. Colonial propaganda in the form of articles, photo series and films bore witness to developmental advances in the colony. The General Government's official publications presented the *évolué*s as perfect inhabitants of the model colony it propagated. To the extent that Belgium, as heir to the atrocities in the Congo Free State under Léopold II, asserted the exemplary character of its colonial policy, the *évolués* were to be the poster child of the civilizing mission. The colonial masters' need to assert themselves, meanwhile, engendered great expectations and demands of the Congolese elite. While it is true that British, French and Portuguese colonial officials also declared their inten-

1 Eckert, "Cultural Commuters," 251.

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tion to create a "perfect native,"[2] in the Belgian Congo the goal was to make Africans more perfect still.

Nevertheless, the institutions of elite-making were no mere sites of propaganda. The *évolués* were more than mute supernumeries of colonial propaganda, so their efforts to negotiate a better place within the future colonial order made a certain impact. Despite protestations to the contrary from a seemingly omnipotent colonial state, the social engineering involved in elite-making was always partly a dialogue with the elites themselves. The flipside of the official discourse on colonial development consisted of the demands and claims that the *évolués* derived from it.

Yet Belgian developmental colonialism left the vernacular elite disillusioned. Belgian politicians with responsibility for colonial policy may well have supported reforms, but for many local actors the goal was to retain their power, and they held fast to hierarchies justified in terms of race and culture. In practice, the fear that elite-making might produce not just loyal middlemen, but also anti-colonial and communist activists resulted in a policy of uneasy stalemate. One step forward rhetorically was matched by one step back in practical terms. The demands of the Belgian Congo's educated elite for greater participation in political and social life, for greater recognition and equality were met only to a highly limited degree by the colonial state. If the future became a key *topos* in the *évolués*' discourse, then disappointment was the defining experience of the Lumumba generation,[3] which initially sought to influence post-war colonial policy to its advantage. It is one of the ironies of the history of the Belgian Congo's decolonization that, through its half-hearted reforms after 1945, the colonial state brought about the very thing it had always feared: the emergence of an embittered Congolese elite. The present study thus further substantiates the hypothesis that after the Second World War, "promises of development [aroused] expectations among Africans that could never be fulfilled."[4]

The fraught debate on *évolué* status and its protracted and at times reluctant implementation stood at the centre of this history of disappointment. The elite's demand for a special legal status confronted the colonial state with a dilemma due to its symbolic and power-political implications. How much cultural otherness was acceptable if a status reform was to grant the Congolese elite equality with Europeans in the colony in certain domains? How much legal equality could be conceded if completing the civilizing of the elite ultimately meant

2 Eckert, "Kolonialismus, Moderne," 65.

3 On the generational experience, see Mannheim, *Mensch und Gesellschaft*; Lindner, *Die Stunde*.

4 Eckert, *Herrschen und Verwalten*, 45.

the end of the colonial mission? While the Belgian colonial reformers took their lead from the legal system of the French empire, they lagged behind it in terms of scope and implementation. When the Colonial Ministry, under pressure from the elite, finally managed to carry out the first status reform in 1948, the inhabitants of the *Union Française* had already been granted civil rights. Furthermore, within the French empire, when it came to matters of civil law Africans no longer had to cleave to the cultural templates on which the French legal system was based. They could, as Frederick Cooper states, be citizens and culturally different at the same time.[5] Meanwhile, after 1945 the elite in the Belgian Congo were denied cultural difference if they wished to enjoy a special status. In contrast to the French reforms, neither the *carte du mérite civique* nor immatriculation granted civil rights, but at best equality under civil law with the European population in the Congo. In common with Belgian settlers, status holders were unable to vote. The gradual awarding of privileges lagged far behind the legal equality demanded by the Congolese elite. If we stick with the metaphor of the waiting room as envisaged by one author, then colonial policy continually asked for just a little more patience.

In comparison to French as well as British colonial policy, the imperial world of tomorrow, as presented to the elite by Belgian developmental colonialism, was a world of yesterday. The ambitious plans for economic modernization and welfare programmes were paired with an apolitical, paternalistic and authoritarian approach that brought Belgian post-war colonialism close to the repressive Portuguese model. The figure of the *évolué* laid bare the anachronistic nature of Belgian colonial reforms after 1945. But the colonial state's resolute adherence to the hegemony-legitimizing distinctions so central to the social order entailed tremendous potential for conflict. The educated elite itself was well aware of the contrast with the reforms in France's empire in particular – in Léopoldville, all one had to do was look across the Congo River to Brazzaville. In view of the systematic discrimination, they faced despite their feats of assimilation, the *évolués*, eager to advance socially, increasingly pushed for an end to colonial rule. To the extent that the Belgian colonial state cast doubt on the elite's capacity for development, the *évolués* lost their faith in the colonial state's capacity for development.

Nonetheless, it is pointless to contemplate which variant of developmental colonialism would have had the greatest prospect of retaining the vernacular elite as the cornerstones of the Belgian colonial state. The French variant of developmental colonialism, which involved integrating the population step-by-step

5 See Cooper, *Citizenship*, 12.

in political and civil terms, had already come to an end by the mid-1950s. African politicians' demands for equality had become too costly for the metropole. Moreover, this far-reaching integration policy could by no means prevent spirals of violence, as evident in the Algerian War. Nor did the British empire, with its gradual decentralization of political processes to the benefit of specific colonial territories, offer a viable blueprint. Tellingly, the Belgians took the gradual integration of the elite into consultative bodies, as was occurring in the East and Central African territories regarded as least developed, as their role model. The flexible British post-war policy ultimately entailed a plethora of decolonial developmental paths, which culminated in the early independence of Ghana, but also in settler states in Southern Africa and a colonial war in Kenya. Regardless of the political course adopted by the imperial powers, in 1960 alone the Belgian Congo attained independence along with thirteen French and two British colonies in Africa. In the manner of a domino effect, across much of the continent, which had become "the last refuge for the imperial illusion of permanence after 1945,"[6] over the next few years Africans shook off colonial rule.

Global bourgeoisie and colonial Africa

The history of the Lumumba generation also provides new insights into "bourgeois culture in a colonial world."[7] It challenges narratives on the decolonization of Africa that cast insufficient light on bourgeoisified intermediaries. But this history also casts doubt on the narrative typical of research on the global bourgeoisie, which has focussed on the heyday of the imperial bourgeois age in the long nineteenth century and lost sight not only of the period after the Second World War, but also the crucial decades of decolonization in Africa. In contrast, the present book has emphasized the leading role of the African bourgeoisie in the "short century"[8] of decolonization after 1945 and has shown the value of scrutinizing the "spatiality and temporality"[9] of global bourgeois culture. I thus conclude by recapitulating and fleshing out a few crucial findings.

6 Osterhammel and Jansen, *Dekolonisation*, 73.

7 To modify the subtitle of the following book: F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler, *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

8 O. Enwezor, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2001).

9 For a programmatic account, see Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 1026.

We have seen that notions of bourgeois culture and associated concepts played a leading role in the colonial civilizing mission in the Belgian Congo. The institutions intended to discipline and educate the vernacular elite, introduced by missions and the colonial state in the form of schools, associations and periodicals, aimed to impart values, cultural techniques and behavioural codes dubbed "civilized." Certainly, the contemporary sources constantly refer to the assimilation of the African elite to "European culture," but what this book revealed behind this is a "hegemony of bourgeois culture" that shone through the colonial civilizing mission.[10] In the objectives and vocabulary of the various colonial powers' civilizing missions we can recognize historically mutable and quasi-national differences in bourgeois culture, as also characteristic of the "precarious unity"[11] of the European bourgeoisie. For educated Africans in the British Gold Coast around 1900, for example, the Victorian model of the gentleman was the measure of all things.[12] In Cape Coast, the Anglo-Fanti wore frock coats and had tea (the meal) at five o'clock in the afternoon.[13] In AEF, meanwhile, the *évolués* showed their zeal for French culture by playing the accordion. What Belgium, after the Second World War, understood as presentable bourgeois culture, featured fine differences from the British and French variants.[14] The Belgian version of European civility, which underpinned elite-making in the Congo, assumed a French-speaking African loyal to the state, one involved in associations and upholding a Catholic version of bourgeois culture.

The role of the Christian missions in the imparting of bourgeois culture in colonial Africa can scarcely be overstated, particularly in the case of the Belgian colonial project. While religion and church were long tackled as a marginal topic

10 Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, 30.

11 Kocka, "Europäische Muster," 9–21.

12 In Tanganyika under British administration the cultural model of the gentleman was also crucially important to African bureaucrats into the 1950s. See Eckert, *Herrschen und Verwalten*, 73; for a more general account, see K. Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992).

13 A vivid take on this theme is provided by a satirical play, centred on the educated African elite of the Gold Coast, composed by African author Sekyi as early as 1915; K. Sekyi, *The Blinkards and the Anglo-Fanti. A Comedy* (London: Rex Collings, 1974). The educated class in Sierra Leone, where, after the abolition of the slave trade in the nineteenth century, Great Britain settled enslaved Africans seized at sea, also took its lead from the contemporary Victorian cultural ideal. See Cohen, *Elite Culture*, 23.

14 On the Portuguese case, see M. Bandeira Jéronimo, *The "Civilising Mission" of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870–1930* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

in the history of the European bourgeoisie,[15] scholars have now demonstrated that religiously motivated "bourgeoisification" represented a strategy of social ascent, particularly for peripheral confessional groups – such as Jews and Catholics within the Protestant-dominated German empire.[16] Furthermore, it was religious initiatives that were chiefly responsible for imparting bourgeois virtues to the working class and lower classes in the metropole.[17] In the Belgian empire, there were comparatively strong political and institutional links between the national and colonial projects of the cultural elevation of peripheral groups. This was mainly due to the *Parti Catholique*'s state-supporting role, which it took on at an early stage in comparative European terms. In close collaboration with the Catholic Church, representatives of the *Parti Catholique* in the Colonial Ministry did much to shape events in the Congo, where the Belgian missionary orders took on state responsibilities in healthcare and schooling. Civilizing, modernizing and conversion went hand in hand. In the metropole too, from the late nineteenth century onwards the Catholic pillar held a position of social and political dominance. The church operated most of the schools, while associations, trades unions, insurance companies and recreational organizations, all of them closely aligned with the *Parti Catholique*, shaped the everyday realities of the majority of the population. Patriarchal models of the family, self-discipline and a "decent" way of life promised to preserve social peace. The idea was that Catholic bourgeois culture would produce "good workers" in Belgium and "good *évolués*" in the Congo. In the inter-war period, a system of national education intended to achieve moralization, which had been deployed in Belgium since the late nineteenth century, increasingly informed the civilizing mission in the Congo. In the 1920s, the Belgian colonial state, eager to exploit their physical capacity for work, still saw perfect colonial subjects first and foremost as robust, resilient Congolese, but they were soon joined by the educated *évolués*, who

15 This applied to German research on the bourgeoisie. These gaps have been filled by studies such as T. Mergel, *Zwischen Klasse und Konfession. Katholisches Bürgertum im Rheinland 1794 – 1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); F.M. Kuhlemann, *Bürgerlichkeit und Religion. Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der evangelischen Pfarrer in Baden 1860 – 1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001). See also M. Borutta, "Religion und Zivilgesellschaft: Zur Theorie und Geschichte ihrer Beziehung," *WZB Discussion Paper 4* (2005).

16 In her study of Jewish routes into the German bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, Simone Lässig referred to a "bourgeois religion." The Catholic bourgeoisie has been examined by Mergel, *Zwischen Klasse und Konfession*.

17 See Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare." The case of educated middle class social reformers in working-class neighbourhoods in the east of Berlin under the German Empire and in the Weimar Republic is investigated by Wietschorke, *Arbeiterfreunde*.

rose to become key intermediaries after the Second World War in connection with the modernization programmes spawned by developmental colonialism.

The "second colonisation of Africa,"[18] which occurred in the Belgian Congo after 1945, thus went hand in hand with a "second civilizing mission." The *évolués* were not only to be immunized against anti-colonial and communist ideas, but also to mature into moral, pious middlemen loyal to the state. Men passed through Catholic-run secondary schools, sought to achieve the highest level of educational attainment available in the colony at seminaries and got involved in extramural associations and periodicals linked with Catholic Action. At the *foyer sociaux*, their wives learned all about "civilized family life," which included knitting, cooking in a kitchen and decorating the living room. In addition to the embrace of Christianity, the men's efforts to advance within society and attain an enhanced legal status chiefly required education, employment closely linked with the state and lived bourgeoisness.

Those Congolese designated as *évolués* – and their families – were the target of a colonial "bourgeoisifying mission." The "ideology of mission [that] legitimized"[19] colonial rule was thus clothed in a garb that was meant to fit the new geopolitical order. Beyond the colony, the idealistic discourse on culturally bourgeoisified *évolués* was an attempt to respond to the international critique of the Belgian colonial system. Through its model *évolué*, Belgium sought to demonstrate the progress of colonial development, particularly to the United Nations. The bourgeoisifying mission also served another purpose for the colonial state: within the colony, the so-called "perfected blacks" functioned not just as a normative developmental model for the cultural perfecting of the elite, but also as cultural intermediaries. Just as, from the 1920s on, the Catholic missions in the Congo had found Congolese converts to be the most successful proselytizers for the Christian faith, the *évolués*, closely linked with the state, were supposed to exercise a civilizing influence on society as a whole through their exemplary lifestyle and morality. The idea of a delegated civilizing mission was embedded in the colonial state's elite-making. Very much in line with the Africa-focussed sociology of elites as it existed at the time, the small Congolese elite was to function as a "standard-setting group."[20] Creating bourgeoisified intermediaries was a late colonial technique of domination, intended to achieve the "pacification" of colonial society by imparting bourgeois values and lifestyles. Within the framework of developmental colonialism, apart from the tried-and-tested tools of re-

18 Crowder, "Second World War," 28.
19 Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus*, 21.
20 Nadel, "Concept of Social Elites," 422.

pression, the Belgian colonial state increasingly relied on "soft power," that is, indirect rule through cultural means.[21]

The "recasting" of the civilizing mission in the Congo and the "re-recasting of bourgeois Europe"[22] were two sides of the same coin. After the Second World War, when missionary work expanded and for the first time the colonial state declared its intention to create an elite, in Belgium too moral reconstruction was underpinned by the Christian-bourgeois impetus of the newly founded PSC. In Western Europe, the emergence of "middle-class societies" led to the "universalization of bourgeois culture" while the "bourgeoisie as a social formation disintegrated."[23] This has prompted scholars concerned with the global bourgeoisie to neglect the post-war period. In Western European countries such as Belgium with Christian Democratic governments, however, the emphasis on bourgeois virtues and models of life promised a return to the Europe imagined to have existed prior to the civilizational rupture of the Second World War.[24] It was not until the 1950s, as a result of the consumer society, Americanization, youth cultures and a cultural conflict between church and state that the conservative model of society came under increasing pressure.[25] If we include the Belgian Congo in this picture of an era, it emerges that it was only after the war that bourgeoisness developed into proof of the vernacular elite's claim to distinction. The elite-making pursued by the colonial administration and missions was imbued by the conservative post-war *zeitgeist*. In the Congo and in Belgium, Christian women's associations awarded prizes for the most beautiful living room, honouring exemplary wives and mothers of nuclear households. The *évolués* were a projection screen for desired notions of Catholic bourgeois culture, which was once again gaining traction in Belgium as a societal norm. But while the civilizing mission in the Belgian Congo initially represented a global process that Europe had gone through first and that the Congolese elite had to catch up with, in a civilizational sense the "bourgeoisification" of the elite led

21 Decolonization in Africa was a violent process. This was particularly evident in Algeria and Kenya, but also during the Congo Crisis. Fittingly, however, studies of the first two cases refer to "wars of modernization." This term underlines the fact that in the late colonial era destruction and violence went hand in hand with construction and education. See S. Malinowski, "Modernisierungskriege. Militärische Gewalt und koloniale Modernisierung im Algerienkrieg (1945–1962)," *AfS* 48 (2008).

22 Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 78.

23 Conze, "Eine bürgerliche Republik?," 531–532.

24 On the German and Western European post-war phenomenon of a socio-cultural turn to the past, see ibid., 534.

25 On the cultural conflict of the 1950s in Europe, see W. Faulstich, *Die Kultur der 50er Jahre* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2002).

to the same place European society was supposed to return to. Hence, the roots of the civility propagated to the *évolués* lay not in a European bourgeois age that had ended, but in a post-war society seeking refuge in its own bourgeois past. Elite-making in the post-war Belgian Congo, then, was not an example of colonies as European "laboratories of modernity,"[26] but rather as conservators of European notions of tradition. Moderation, religiosity, the nuclear family, a patriarchal gender order: this ideal-typical bourgeois way of life tells us more about the metropolitan than the colonized society. Thus, what comes to light in the ideal of civilized culture that was exported to Central Africa is the – nostalgically romanticized – self-image of a rediscovered Western European bourgeois culture.

But what exactly was the relationship between the synchronous projects of "bourgeoisification" in Belgium and the Congo? This question is especially pressing in the case of Belgian colonial rule, which had little impact on the metropole in comparison with other European imperial powers in the view of most historians. The *cordon sanitaire*, which strongly regulated the exchange of people and ideas between colony and metropole, was a near-insurmountable barrier for the *évolués* as well. Freedom of opinion and movement, international contacts and mobility: in the Belgian empire all of this was subject to especially rigid control. While Congolese were denied entry to Belgium until the late 1950s, the immigration policy in the colony allowed in only colonial officials classed as respectable, a small number of settlers and, above all, Belgian missionaries. In the Belgian empire, then, what we find are essentially one-way channels of transfer.[27] When it came to the "bourgeoisifying mission" as well, the influence of the metropole on the colony was far greater than the other way round.[28] The *évolués* had to adapt to the ideals of a Belgian post-war bourgeois culture. But we have no evidence that the bourgeoisified *évolués* had direct effects on the notions of order found in post-war Belgian society,[29] which has

26 D. van Laak, "Kolonien als 'Laboratorien der Moderne'?," in *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914*, eds. S. Conrad and J. Osterhammel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

27 A call for a history of entanglements that pays attention to varying degrees of intensity and to directionality has been made, for example, by M. Juneja and M. Pernau, "Lost in Translation? Transcending Boundaries in Comparative History," in *Comparative and Transnational History. Central European and New Perspectives*, eds. H.-G. Haupt and J. Kocka (New York: Berghahn, 2009).

28 See Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*; Stanard, "Belgium, the Congo."

29 That the social history of Belgium has been under-researched was recently emphasized by Vanthemsche, "Introduction," 12. The associated anthology on the history of social classes in Belgium is a first step towards closing this gap; G. Vanthemsche, *Les classes sociales en Belgique. Deux siècles d'histoire* (Brussels: CRISP, 2017).

much to do with the state-enforced separation of metropole and colony, the negligible degree of engagement with the Congo, which was limited to a small section of Belgian society, and the prohibition on residence in the metropole for Congolese. The prevailing image of the Congo in Belgium was moulded by exhibitions at the Tervuren Museum and *Tintin* comics. The vernacular elite, meanwhile, had no platform from which they might have countered the image of uncivilized Congolese disseminated by colonial propaganda.[30] To what extent the history of Belgium's working class and bourgeoisie requires revision in light of the colonized territories is a question for other empirical research projects. In any case, the history of the colonial state's elite-making in the Belgian Congo as presented in this book would have been incomplete had it failed to take account of synchronous metropolitan projects of "bourgeoisification."

Another key argument reinforces the need to focus on the *évolués* as a target of the civilizing mission: a history of bourgeois culture on a global scale must consider the ambivalent processes of the inclusion and exclusion of colonized populations.

The African bourgeoisie furnishes us with an impressive example of the way in which the bourgeois subject was produced through alterity. A number of authors have argued persuasively that this subject took shape historically not just as distinct from the nobility and the lower classes in the metropole, but also *vis-à-vis* the colonized.[31] The processes of the constitution of bourgeois citizens, workers and the colonized were simultaneous and at times related and they produced social, economic, cultural and ethnic difference in an imperial world in such a way as to stabilize hegemony.[32] European actors in the Belgian Congo denied the *évolués* their civilizational development, cementing the ideal of the bourgeois citizen as European, white, male and elitist. But the present book has shown that the Congolese elites dissented from this, shaking the colonial order through their own cultural "bourgeoisification."

The European cultural model of the bourgeois citizen was in fact tied spatially to the mother country within the colonial civilizing mission and, as an object of research, was long limited to European history.[33] Yet, middlemen in colonial Africa also articulated notions of bourgeois culture. If we accept proposed ana-

30 On the images of the Congo found in Belgian colonial propaganda, see Stanard, *Selling*, 154 and 254.

31 See, for example, Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare"; C. Dejung and M. Langwiler, "Einleitung," in *Ränder der Moderne. Neue Perspektiven auf die Europäische Geschichte (1800–1930)*, eds. C. Dejung and M. Langwiler (Cologne: Böhlau, 2016), 22.

32 Christof Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie."

33 See Pernau, "Transkulturelle Geschichte," 146.

lyses of a bourgeois way of life as the individual and historically mutable adoption of bourgeois ideals and practices,[34] then on the face of it we can find evidence of such a process of diffusion among representatives of the Congolese elite as well. Here the *évolués*' self-descriptions were strikingly reminiscent of the classic bourgeois discourse in Western Europe.[35] In articles in periodicals or in talks delivered to association members, the educated elite spoke in favour of values such as the continual civilizing of the self and the perfectibility of character. Authors defended bourgeois models of virtue and education. They promoted the monogamous nuclear family, upright domesticity and sensible recreational pursuits in associations, while highlighting their respectability by condemning the materialism and supposedly immoral pleasures of some "false" *évolués*.

As a *topos* in the discourse on the bourgeois citizen in the post-war Belgian Congo, perfectibility fell on particularly fertile soil. For educated Congolese, the concept held out the prospect of ascending, through their own efforts, the ladder of cultural development within the framework of a universalist civilization. Through their self-perfecting, this group expected to enhance their respectability and rights, though in the colonial situation these were the very things that separated Europeans and Africans.[36] The unequal attribution of respectability, which was established on a racist or culturalist basis, legitimized the discriminatory treatment of colonial subjects and a colonial rule that was based on distinctions.[37] That the members of the educated elite, the majority of whom worked as office assistants, adopted the polite idiom of administrative correspondence in their everyday language was no doubt partly because this was the exact opposite of the disrespectful forms of address suffered by Africans in the colonial situation. The appeal of the bourgeois figure of the "perfected black" was the sharp contrast it provided with the supposedly primitive and immature *indigène*. In the post-war Belgian Congo, "the well-educated African elite from the cities saw themselves as [bourgeois] citizens and no longer wished [to be] natives."[38]

Attempts to ascend within, and integrate into, colonial society by adopting bourgeois ways of life are also evident in other African countries. From the 1880s on, the educated elite in British colonies such as the Gold Coast and Nigeria

34 See M. Hettling and S.-L. Hoffmann, "Zur Historisierung bürgerlicher Werte. Eine Einleitung," in *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel. Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, eds. M. Hettling and S.-L. Hoffmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 11.

35 See ibid., 12–13.

36 See A. L. Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures," *American Ethnologist* 16 (November 1989): 643 and 649.

37 Ibid., 648.

38 Eckert, *Kolonialismus*, 84.

joined "improvement clubs," where they sought to live up to a bourgeois cultural ideal.[39] Much like the *évolués* in the Congo, the "middle class" in Rhodesia and South Africa also demanded equal rights for equally civilized people.[40] The effort to achieve social ascent through cultural "bourgeoisification" seems to be a typical attribute of societies in which social segregation and systematic discrimination are justified with reference to racist suppositions of inequality. By the late nineteenth century "with their social clubs, African Americans in the United States were trying to outdo the white middle classes in terms of respectability and civic virtue."[41]

But it is only at first sight that the Belgian Congo provides backing for the idea that "occasionally the most bourgeois of the bourgeois stepped outside the historical trajectory of bourgeois mentality."[42] The *évolués*' life experiences expose the narrative of the global dissemination of Eurocentric bourgeois culture as an "illusion of diffusion." Bourgeois distinction in the Belgian Congo by no means escaped the colonial logic of exclusionary inclusion. On the one hand, the bourgeoisified elite occupied a position from which they could articulate legitimate criticisms and demands, and they held a status that granted them certain privileges. Hence, the demonstrative display of bourgeois culture could certainly indicate emancipation and rebellion against ascribed civilizational backwardness. On the other hand, the *évolués* had to bow to colonial conceptions of order and accept the resulting limits to their upward social mobility and recognition. Ultimately, cultural "bourgeoisification" was an empowerment strategy pursued by the Congolese elite, but it was a strategy that buttressed the colonial order.

Perfectibility stood at the heart of this paradox. In the nineteenth century, the idea of perfecting had already spurred the Western European bourgeois citizen to pursue cultural self-improvement, but it had always been directed against this individual.[43] *Évolués* and European bourgeois citizens sought to achieve a

39 On the Gold Coast, see Newell, "Territory of Elites," 223–224; Prais, "Imperial Travelers," 20. On Nigeria, see N. Sawada, "The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers. In Search of Unity for the Progress of Society" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 2011); George, *Making Modern Girls*. On the case of the African Americans who settled in Liberia, see Marx, "Siedlerkolonien," 90–91.

40 See West, *Rise*, 192–193.; R. Ross, "Missions, Respectability and Civil Rights: The Cape Colony, 1828–1854," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999).

41 Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit*, 47.

42 J. Osterhammel, "Hierarchies and Connections: Aspects of a Global Social History," in *An Emerging Modern World: 1750–1870*, eds. S. Conrad and J. Osterhammel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 832.

43 See Hettling and Hoffmann, "Historisierung," 15.

state that had to remain unattainable. This "element of future promise,"[44] that is, the belief that the perfecting of character had to be projected into the future and would inevitably remain incomplete, had different consequences in the late colonial situation. In their articles, the *évolués* presented themselves as evidence of a "completed" civilizing mission. Perfectibility held out the prospect of social ascent, more rights, a political say and equality with Europeans. Yet the unachievability already inherent in the concept of perfectibility served the colonial state as proof that very few Congolese had achieved the kind of cultural development that would have allowed it to accede to their demands in good conscience.

Constant references to the *évolués*' backwardness is symptomatic of the common twentieth-century trope of the "temporalization of difference."[45] This suggests that we can explain European societies' lead over the rest of the world in terms of their "temporal superiority."[46] The colonized societies were required to move on from the "imaginary waiting-room of history"[47] by making up civilizational ground, yet it was characteristic of racist colonial discourse that it denied them this promised concurrence.[48] The temporality embedded in the concept of the *évolués* consisted in declaring the incomplete process of self-civilizing a permanent state of affairs. To be a bourgeois citizen meant developing into one.[49] Being *évolué*, meanwhile, meant being permanently incapable of becoming one.

Against this background, we may interpret the practice of awarding the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation as a bureaucratic procedure that was part and parcel of colonial rule and that facilitated the negotiation and assertion of the power-stabilizing distinction between Europeans and Africans. As a rule, the lack of congruence between normative discourse and individual practice was taken as an indication of the *évolués*' insufficient civility and was interpreted

44 Ibid.

45 Conrad and Eckert, "Globalgeschichte," 21.

46 S. Conrad, "A Cultural History of Global Transformation," in *An Emerging Modern World: 1750–1870*, eds. S. Conrad and J. Osterhammel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 554.

47 D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 11.

48 For a detailed account, see J. Fabian, *The Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 35; for an introduction, see A. Eckert, "Afrika in der Welt. Afrikanische Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Geschichte denken. Perspektiven auf die Geschichtsschreibung heute*, ed. M. Wildt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 132.

49 See M. Hettling, "Die persönliche Selbständigkeit. Der archimedische Punkt bürgerlicher Lebensführung," in *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel. Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, eds. M. Hettling and S.-L. Hoffmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 58.

as highlighting the unequal developmental level of the Congolese and European populations. The awarding committees sought to assess whether individuals had internalized bourgeois ideals, such that the policy of elite selection stabilized the colonial order, which assumed and affirmed difference. The discourse on the "bourgeoisification" of the elite thus perpetuated the racist narrative of Africans' imperfection, based on which the Belgian colonial state legitimized its ongoing obligation to pursue the civilizing mission and maintain colonial rule.

This debate on the limits of civilizational development in the Belgian Congo corresponded with a post-war discourse at large within the international community on the political maturity of the colonies. For Belgian colonial policy, the restrictive awarding of elite status was not so much a means of fostering this elite as of questioning whether it existed at all. In a time-consuming process, the awarding committees thus showed that even the elite still lacked the necessary maturity to exercise political rights. Within the context of international diplomacy, the *évolués'* failure in the court of elite formation served Belgian politicians as an argument for delaying the Congolese population's political integration.

The colonial state's elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo was thus a late colonial form of the "politics of difference."[50] While the African bourgeoisie went to great lengths to persuade the colonial state that they deserved equality, the authorities expended a great deal of energy showing Congolese how imperfect they were, regardless of their efforts to assimilate. The awarding committees tended to regard the *évolués* as backward rather than as social climbers, as "almost savage" rather than "almost civilized." Instead of facilitating the legal assimilation of the elite, the status reforms perpetuated colonial distinction: they merely provided for the gradual extension of privileges and rights, as geared towards the *évolués*' supposed rate of development.

The restrictive process of elite selection in the Belgian Congo thus reinforced the notion that the cultural assimilation of the *évolués* was an impossibility. The more the elite sought to adapt to the bourgeois model, the more the politics of difference came into play. The protracted debates and the complex bureaucracy surrounding the so-called *évolué* status are among the many aspects that underline how the colonial administration produced hegemony-stabilizing distinctions through interaction with African intermediaries. The *évolués* represented the Belgian variant of the "mimic man," described by Homi Bhabha as "almost the same, but not quite [...] almost the same, but not white."[51]

50 J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 11–13.

51 Bhabha, *Location*, 89.

If colonial policy sought to turn the elite into an "indigenous bourgeoisie,"[52] then it did so half-heartedly at best. In terms of culture and lifestyle, Congolese were supposed to strive to achieve "bourgeoisification," but this was not to be taken as grounds for any claim to social power, a political say or respectability. More than any other group, the elite experienced the limits of the model of upward social mobility through cultural adaptation and colonial bourgeois culture.[53] They climbed to the top of the developmental ladder of civility, only to bump their heads against the glass ceiling of the colonial order.

In the context of colonial history, this finding is consonant with studies that view the disappointment of the educated elite, a group closely aligned with the colonial state, as an important cultural engine for decolonization.[54] What Jürgen Osterhammel states of colonial Asia also goes for the African continent: "The denial of recognition as equal citizens [...] made some of the 'most western' Asians implacable opponents of colonialism."[55] Many of the anti-colonial and nationalist leaders had been socialized as bourgeoisified middlemen, attended European-run schools, and held posts as teachers, administrative employees or lawyers, all professions that corresponded with Europe's lower middle class.

Before Mahatma Gandhi demanded India's independence clad in a loincloth, he practised as a besuited lawyer in South Africa. After receiving an education at mission schools in Dakar, Léopold Sédar Senghor, longstanding deputy in the French National Assembly and later the first president of Senegal, was employed at French universities, where he developed an anti-colonial cultural philosophy supportive of the state during the inter-war period in the shape of *Negritude*.[56] Regardless of colonial hierarchies and experiences of exclusion in the metropole, such figures increasingly felt destined for greater things, not just culturally, but politically as well. In his study of the middle class in Rhodesia, Michael O. West has already shown that less internationally networked middlemen were as much the bearers as recipients of anti-colonial or at least emancipatory ideas. In the Belgian Congo too, it was the culturally bourgeoisified elite that rapidly staked their claim as political representatives of various population groups and that seized the positions of power in the post-colonial state. At times, for oppressed individuals, the bourgeois promise of respectability, a polit-

52 Piron, "L'évolution," 63.

53 West's study of the African middle class in Rhodesia comes to a similar conclusion: West, *Rise*, 13.

54 See West, *Rise*.

55 J. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: C.H. Beck, 2009), 1094–1095.

56 Riesz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor*.

ical say and recognition seemed like a call for the overthrow of colonial power relations.

The demeanour of "bourgeois radicals"[57] was sometimes irritating to contemporaries. Thirty years before Jomo Kenyatta became prime minister of Kenya, which achieved independence after a lengthy war of liberation, he moved in London's pan-Africanist circles as a student, the Comintern viewing him as a potential ally in the early 1930s. During Kenyatta's period of study in Moscow, however, the former mission school pupil's behaviour led to conflicts with students from other parts of the colonized world with a Marxist background: "(...) we used to call him a petty bourgeois. He used to say, 'I don't like this "petty" thing. Why don't you say I'm a big bourgeois?'"[58]

So far, historians have paid little attention to the ambivalent positionings and convoluted paths followed by bourgeoisified Africans in the age of decolonization. They have shown interest in the biographies of famous politicians but largely failed to consider the generation to which they belonged. Yet the transformation of the loyal elite into anti-colonial politicians is testimony to the "unintended side effects" of colonial policy, which accelerated the process of decolonization in many African countries.[59] A history of the African bourgeoisie informed by global history thus sheds new light on decolonization, while also promising to provide an enhanced understanding of the genesis of anti-colonialism and post-colonial politics.

To conclude, let's return to the bourgeois idyll conveyed by the photograph with which this book began. During an interview in Kinshasa, the elderly journalist Auguste Camille Mwissa-Camus recognized a deceased acquaintance in this picture of the "Congolese *évolué* family in Léopoldville."[60] He identified the newspaper-reading father as Jean Mavuela. Not part of the political world,

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57 C. Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals. The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation 1941–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

58 W. McClellan, "Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925–1934," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26 (1993): 380.

59 W. Reinhard, "Dialektik des Kolonialismus. Kolonialismus und die Anderen," in *Europa und die Dritte Welt. Kolonialismus – Gegenwartsprobleme – Zukunftsperspektiven*, eds. K. Bade and D. Brötel (Hannover: Metzler, 1992), 8. For other case studies, see A. A. Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). On the case of Tanganyika, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 194–203; on Senegal, see Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*, 275–278; on Zimbabwe, see West, *Rise*, 203–235; on South Africa, see C. Marx, "Verwoerdian Apartheid and African Political Elites in South Africa, 1950–1968," in *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, eds. J. Dülffer and M. Frey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); on Ghana, see Kimble, *Political History of Ghana*, 135–140.

60 Interview with Camille Auguste Mwissa-Camus, Kinshasa, 24 August 2010.

he was not at the centre of attention, but in colonial times he was one of the first Congolese lawyers in Léopoldville and a founding member of the illustrious *Cercle d'Études et d'Agrément*. A meeting was arranged at short notice with his son Anselme Mavuela, who happened to be in Kinshasa in his role as manager of the African division of the International Basketball Federation. Holding the photograph in his hands, he laughed out loud: "That's my dad right there!" But then he looked more closely and shook his head repeatedly, as if he had been deceived:

> I recognize that radio there. They were big boxes back then. That is our living room. But [...] I'm not sure. Maybe we got that furniture from somewhere else to spruce everything up. That wasn't normal, that was done for the photograph. The children were usually outside, and the mother was in the kitchen. The mother well-dressed, the little kid too. And then that pot for serving coffee? No, no, no. This is a staged photograph. It was set up! [...] When my father was reading, we weren't in the living room, you know?[61]

This anecdote brings out the challenge taken up by the present book. I have sought to write a history of the African bourgeoisie that looks behind the curtain of the colonial state's staged elite formation and that takes account not just of the construction of colonial categories, but of the appropriation and reinvention of these categories in everyday contexts. In other words, I have explored how actors filled the label *évolué* with life, associated it with certain demands and reinterpreted it. The concept of the *évolué* oscillated between lifeworld and colonial propaganda, unleashing its full explosive power for the Lumumba generation in the course of decolonization.

61 Interview with Anselme Mavuela, Kinshasa, 31 August 2010.

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Archives Africaines
AAPC	All-African People's Conference
AI	Affaires Indigènes
ABAKO	Association des Bakongo pour l'unification, la conservation et l'expansion de la langue kikongo
ADAPES	Association des anciens élèves des pères de Scheut
AEF	Afrique Équatoriale Française
AES	Association des Évolués de Stanleyville
AfS	Archiv für Sozialgeschichte
AMI	École assistants médicaux indigènes
AOF	Afrique-Occidentale française
APIPO	Association des Postiers de la Province Orientale
ARNACO	Archives Nationales du Congo
ARSC	Association Royale Sportive Congolaise Indigène
ASSANEF	Association des anciens élèves des Frères
CEC	Centre extra-coutumier
CEPSI	Centre d'études des problèmes sociaux indigènes
CEREA	Centre de Regroupement Africain
CONAKAT	Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga
CPPI	Commission Permanente de la Protection des Indigènes
FEDACOL	Fédération des unions provinciales de colons au Congo et au Ruanda-Urundi
FEDEKWALEO	Fédérations Kwango-Kwiloise
FEDEQUALAC	Fédération de l' Équateur et du lac Léopold II
FV	Fonds Verhaegen
GG	General Government
JOC	Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne
KADOC	Katholiek Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum voor Religie, Cultuur en Samenleving, Leuven
MNC	Mouvement National Congolais
MOC	Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien
MRAC	Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale
NAAPC	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
OCA	Office des Cités Africaines
PCB	Parti Communiste de Belgique
PSB	Parti Socialiste Belge
PSC	Parti Social Chrétien
POB	Parti Ouvrier Belge
PNP	Parti National du Progrès
PUNA	Parti de l'Unité Nationale

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UCOL	Union pour la Colonisation
UMHK	Union Minière du Haut Katanga
UNAKI	Union agricole du Kivu
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISCO	Union des Intérêts Sociaux Congolais
UN	United Nations
ZfG	Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft

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Fig. 16: HP.1959.28.821, collection RMCA Tervuren; Picture J. Makula (Inforcongo), 1959, RMCA Tervuren ©
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Archival Sources

Archives Africaines, Brussels, Belgium

AA/A54/Info-presse/51	Equipement culturel au Congo, Groupement Belgo-Congolaise
AA/AI/4743/II/T/4	Elites indigènes
AA/AI/4743/III/T/ 4	Évolués-Carte du Mérite Civique Ordonnance, 1947 – 1953
AA/GG/5403	Service de l'Information et de la Propaganda du Congo Belge, 1942 – 1947
AA/GG/5418	Confidentiel, Article paru dans La Croix du Congo, 1953
AA/GG/5952	Confidentiel Projet et Causerie Domont/ Problème Racial, 1955 – 1956
AA/GG/5991	Divers (Note cercle des évolués), Territoire Djolu, 1935 – 1959
AA/GG/6055	Bibliothèque Libenge, Instruction contre censure pour La Voix du Congolais, 1953/1955
AA/GG/6150	Sûreté Instructions divers (Intégration des évolués à la vie européenne, Etudiants congolais en Belgique) Territoire Libenge, 1952 – 1956
AA/GG/6302	Sûreté Essor Arrestation, 1955 – 1957
AA/GG/6322	Divers (Cercle pour évolués), Territoire Libenge, 1949 – 1952
AA/GG/6339	Cercle Leopold II, Cercles des évolués Elisabethville, 1944 – 1947
AA/GG/6372	Cercles pour Evolues Indigenes/Cercle Van Gele de Libenge, 1949 – 1953
AA/GG/7755	Publication divers (Mbandanka), Territoire Budjala, 1954 – 1957
AA/GG/7921	Cercle Gouverneur Pierre Ryckmans, Lisala, 1945 – 1952
AA/GG/8079	Propaganda Voix du Congolais/Nos Images, Territoire Gemena, 1955 – 1956
AA/GG/8693	Divers (Cercles évolués) Territoire Ikela, 1947
AA/GG/10211	Immatriculation des Congolais Application Decret, 1950 – 1955
AA/GG/10384	Article pour la Voix du Congolais, Cité de Coquilhatville, 1945
AA/GG/11096	Immatriculation des indigènes Territoire Stanleyville, 1953 – 1954
AA/GG/11600	Cercle Excelsior CEC Coquilhatville, 1951
AA/GG/12532	Association femmes libres et de garcons (clercs) du CEC Coquilhatville, 1948
AA/GG/15611	Divers (Propaganda Nos Images), Territoire Inongo, 1956
AA/GG/15726	Carte du mérite civique, instructions et dossiers individuels, Lac Léopold II, 1948 – 1957
AA/GG/16230	Léopoldville AIMO, Groupement Belgo Congolaise, 1950
AA/GG/16543	Divers (Associations, Carte du mérite civique) cité indigène Léopoldville, 1952
AA/GG/17717	Union Belgo-Congolais Stanleyville
AA/GG/18356	Sûreté/Confidentiel, Discrimination Raciale, 1947 – 1955
AA/GG/18682	Sûreté Partis Politiques et Associations indigènes divers, Kivu, 1948 – 1959
AA/GG/18708	Carte du Mérite Civique Correspondances Bukavu Réunions Commission, 1955 – 1957
AA/GG/19596	Instructions et liste associations indigène, ville Léopoldville, 1953

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AA/GG/19669	Carte du Mérite Civique Léopolville, 1948 – 1951
AA/GG/20171	Surêté Associations Indigènes Ville Léopoldville, 1947 – 1953/1958.
AA/GG/20535	Propaganda Presse indigène, La Voix du Congolais, Nos Images, Mbandaka, Territoire Budjala 1956
AA/GG/21256	Dossier Justice Parquet Léopoldville Note Carte du Mérite Civique, 1955
AA/GG/21875	Dossier Justice Commission Carte du Mérite Civique, 1948 – 1951
AA/GG/PPA/3478	Communauté Belgo-Congolaise

Archives de l'Etat en Belgique, Brussels, Belgium

Extranet.arch.be/lang_pv-minister.html	Gouvernement Hubert Pierlot à Londres, Procès-verbal du Conseil des Ministres, 09.03.1944

Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Fonds Verhaegen, Tervuren, Belgium

FV/RDC/Lumumba/N°009/4	Lumumba, Accra

Katholiek Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum voor Religie, Cultuur en Samenleving, Leuven, Belgium

KADOC/G/XIII/b/4/2	Folder containing items concerning La Croix du Congo, 1955 – 1957
KADOC/O/II/b/9/5	Problème des Évolués, 03.03.1945
KADOC/O/II/a/11/18	Presse hostile, reactions on articles in Le Progres und L'Avenir
KADOC/P/II/a/4/2/3/5	La Croix du Congo, 1955 – 1957
KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/4	Associations
KADOC/P/II/a/4/14/11	Association Sportive Congolaise
KADOC/P/II/b/11/12	Newspapers, Croix du Congo, Avenir, Colonial Belge Courrier d'Afrique, 1930 – 1947
KADOC/ Z/III/d/2/7	Enseignement résultats scolaires Rapports 1952 – 1958

Archives Nationales du Congo, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

ARNACO/3CC/113/592	Lisala Carte du Mérite Civique
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